

# Public Archaeology

## Arts of Engagement

edited by

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**Access Archaeology**





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*In memory of Dr Peter Boughton FSA, Keeper of Art for West Cheshire Museums*



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## Acknowledgements

This volume was inspired by the dearth of wide-ranging evaluations of public archaeology's strategies involving, and intersections with, visual and artistic technologies, practices and data. It stems from the 2<sup>nd</sup> University of Chester Archaeology Student Conference, held on 5 April 2017 at the Grosvenor Museum, Chester: *Archaeo-Engage: Engaging Communities in Archaeology*. The book includes the work of a selection of the students who delivered formative presentations and subsequently wrote up their summative assignments for publication with sustained editorial guidance. These are combined with a rich range of additional contributions, including those from other former University of Chester students and current staff, commissioned during 2017 and 2018.

We wish to extend our thanks to colleagues in Department of History and Archaeology at the University of Chester who supported this second venture in facilitating a student conference and taking it forward to publication. In particular, we are grateful for the support of Dr Kara Critchell, Dr Amy Gray Jones and Professor Meggen Gondek. We also sincerely appreciate the support and help of the staff of Cheshire West and Chester's Grosvenor Museum, notably Dr Peter Boughton, who worked hard to facilitate the event. Thanks also go to University of Chester postgraduate researchers Brian Costello, Gary Duckers and Abigail Górkiewicz Downer in supporting the students' work before and during the conference. The University of Chester's audio-visual technicians completed the invaluable task of video-recording and editing the conference for digital dissemination. In addition to the student's talks, the day conference was enhanced considerably by the presentations of the two guest-speakers: Dr Lorna-Jane Richardson and Dr Mike Heyworth. Thanks to all the students who worked on the planning and organisation of the event, especially to Jonathan Felgate for his logo and poster design. The audience of academics, heritage professionals, students and members of the public made the conference viable, valuable and memorable experience for all concerned and we hope that this book reflects and extends the debates aired on the day.

Regarding the book, we appreciate the commitment and flexibility of all the authors who agreed to submit their work for publication, and to the host of expert anonymous referees who evaluated each contribution and helped the editors to steer the work towards publication. The collection is enriched by a Foreword by digital heritage specialist Dr Sara Perry and a Discussion piece by prehistorian Dr Seren Griffiths.

The venue of publication is also not arbitrary for a volume exploring new themes and best practice in community engagement in archaeological research. Rather than pursuing a traditional venue of an expensive short print-run academic book, we decided to exploit the new Access Archaeology publication model of Archaeopress. In exchange for conducting all the copy-editing and typesetting ourselves as editors, this allows the book to appear as print-on-demand in full colour and free open-access publication via the Archaeopress website. We are also extremely grateful to David Davison and Ben Heaney at Archaeopress for unswerving support for this project from start to finish.

Dr Peter Boughton has supported numerous collaborations with the University of Chester in his role as Keeper of Art at Chester's Grosvenor Museum, including the aforementioned 2017 Archaeo-Engage conference which inspired this book. The University awarded Peter with an honorary Doctor of Letters degree in August 2019 in recognition of his life-long contributions to the visual arts in Chester. Very sadly and soon afterwards, Peter passed away on 29 September 2019. We are honoured to dedicate this book to his memory, especially fitting given the numerous ways in which our contributors tackle the relationship between art and archaeology.

# Foreword

Sara Perry

## Critiquing public archaeology

In early 2018, I was invited to contribute to a week-long course in Northern Ireland focused on heritage as a means towards reconciliation. At the request of the organisers, I presented efforts that my teams and I had been pursuing at archaeological sites across Europe, Turkey and North Africa to build civic welfare around heritage, and to evaluate the associated impacts. The course was attended by upwards of 50 individuals working across the archaeological, museums and community-development sectors, some of whom were established professionals, and many of whom were young scholars and practitioners who had travelled from different parts of Ireland, Northern Ireland, Canada, and the USA to explore the topic of 'heritage practices in contested societies'. Given that I was explicitly asked to initiate *critical* discussion on the evaluation of the social impacts of public and community archaeology initiatives, I spoke frankly about both the weaknesses of extant evaluative frameworks and the challenges of developing sustainable programmes in the absence of any such rigorous frameworks.

It would be an understatement to say that my contribution to the course was received negatively. Perhaps alongside other missteps, I made the mistake of focusing heavily on (democratic) governance structures for community engagement projects, summarising my points in a numbered list of 10 key principles of practice. Whilst the list was numbered merely for convenience (an error that I shall never repeat!), it was interpreted by several men in the room as my own proclamation on the degree of importance of certain activities, and was therefore seemingly dismissed in its entirety. I also made the mistake of citing a particular scholar, whose deeply critical views of community archaeological evaluative measures, and their poorly evidenced positive impacts, were vehemently disliked by multiple practitioners in the room. This dislike became immediately obvious when I moved from my brief introductory talk into an interactive group session. Here, I assigned participants the task of debating together, then feeding back to the full class, how well (if at all) the 10 democratic structuring principles might work in their own contexts of practice. Instantly, however, the activity was hijacked by a small but incredibly vocal group of mostly senior white men.<sup>1</sup>

Rather than invest any time in discussing the specifics of governance as requested, these men turned the focus entirely back on me, subjecting me in front of the crowd to a string of criticisms and accusations. More than one individual rejected the idea that any form of rigorous analysis should be demanded of community archaeology because the effects were 'obvious', should not be quantified (although I made no claim that quantitative measures were an imperative), nor held to any generalisable standards of quality or impact. It was repeatedly insinuated that I had no place speaking about these matters, and that if I intended to come into a charged environment like this again with the same arguments, I should 'toughen up'.

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<sup>1</sup> I cannot dwell here on what I perceive to be a clear relationship between my (less powerful) identity and the identities and responses of my critics. However, at this event, I was asked by the organisers to take a risky position, and those resistant to such risky statements were then allowed to overwhelm me, thereby masking any weaknesses in their normative approaches. This phenomenon of identity-based oppression is common in archaeology, its prevalence documented by a growing number of scholars, especially Heath-Stout (2019) and Cook (2019) (for heritage/museums, also see Callihan and Feldman 2018).

At some point, probably more than 20 minutes into these attacks, one of my session partners intervened. He attempted to defend me and push back against the unfounded statements launched at me, but by then the session had been derailed, succumbing to what, I believe, were fundamentally anti-intellectual and anti-science viewpoints. I was overwhelmed by the circumstances, particularly by the fact that these views were seemingly propounded by established practitioners. Indeed, so visibly upset was I that a series of younger participants later approached me to apologise (unnecessarily, as they had no role in the affair, and the career-related risks to them for intervening might have been too high), expressing their concern at the behaviour of this zealous – yet relatively well-known and professionally-established – sub-section of the crowd.

### **Accepting critique as a necessary component of public archaeology**

I have long wanted to publicly reflect on this experience, not least because of the many ironies inherent in a course focused on ‘reconciliation’ devolving into an unapologetic group attack on a lone presenter. It has been deeply affecting for me both personally and professionally, particularly given that myself and my teams identify as committed community and public archaeologists with shared goals and aspirations. Stepping back and with further reflection, it has led me to wonder under which circumstances we could ever be excused from constructively critiquing our community-based work. Yet in my experience, community and public archaeological projects are notorious for avoiding or dismissing both external scrutiny and internally-focused self-reflection (for comparable arguments see, among others, Ellenberger and Richardson 2018, and Fredheim 2018).

Powerfully, the contributions to *Public Archaeology: Arts of Engagement* prove to me that such critique and scrutiny are not avoidable nor inappropriate, but a cornerstone of contemporary public and community archaeological practice. This volume is a needed and truly exciting commentary on the present state of the field. It is one of the first compendiums to consistently celebrate, as opposed to castigate, meticulous, evidence-based reflection, and to nurture (especially in junior contributors) an insistence on cumulative learning in order to advance and strengthen future work. Authors are not afraid to think through the weaknesses of projects at large: Parry, for example, recognises that current initiatives are generally too ‘small-scale and diffused in their aims and objectives’ (p. 39) to achieve genuine social impact. Authors are not afraid to question the means by which we fund (and otherwise shape resilience into) our community endeavours, demonstrating per Beresford that, of the main models of community archaeology in use today, ‘none of them are sustainable on their own’ (p. 42). And authors are not afraid to cast a critical eye on the methodologies that we deploy to engage people, with Williams and Alexander (p. 72) clearly evidencing how these methods may ‘valorise and misrepresent’ certain pasts to appease contemporary interests.

Authors are frank about where they have modelled themselves differently, often displaying a willingness to put forward arguments that may otherwise seem unpopular or that challenge accepted wisdom in public archaeology. Humphries, for instance, makes clear that top-down intervention is often vital for community initiatives to take off, providing participants with confidence and support that may be key to success (p. 54). The challenge, then, becomes how we ensure that these same top-down measures do not create an inescapable status quo. Stringfellow’s and Pudney’s chapters are especially notable in demanding that we be more realistic and aware of our approaches and impacts, and that we work far more diligently in the future to capture learnings from our projects and meaningfully apply them. Both authors also compel us to appreciate that we may never be able to (indeed, perhaps we should not wish to) achieve genuine social change, and hence we must consider productive alternatives which could better play to our strengths as archaeologists (per Pudney, these might entail community projects designed ‘to have socially active material legacies’ (p. 120)). At its core, then, this book offers the space, and creates the conditions, for people to be constructively critical in their practice. Indeed, it goes further by actually incorporating



and showcasing critical forms of public communication (see chapters by Swogger, Boyle, Barkman-Astles, Duckworth, Ezzeldin, Clarke, McInnes, Brophy and Sackett, Giles and Croucher), and making demands on us to invest long-term in community and public archaeology work as opposed to one-off, time-limited projects (which appear to be the norm in the sector) (see chapter by Hijazi *et al.*).

### Public archaeology as the path towards a revised archaeological practice

One might argue that public archaeology has long operated in a fashion that (borrowing from Ahmed 2012) concretises the status quo and allows the colluders in such concretisation to escape questioning. What is often at work here, as Ahmed puts it, is that we *presume* we are acting critically (whether we are or not), thereby ‘protecting ourselves from complicity’ (2012: 5). As amply evidenced across multiple chapters in this volume, the implications of the approaches employed by community and public archaeologists have often not been understood, and the ironies inherent in the outcomes are tremendous and disturbing. This is no better demonstrated than by Stringfellow in her outstanding critical analysis of a series of community archaeology projects, wherein she concludes that “‘community’ does not best describe what these projects do’ (p. 104). Rather, the ‘archaeology in “community archaeology” [is] the predominant motivation’ (p. 100), meaning that real economic and social effects are frequently unaccounted for.

This predicament is perhaps not surprising given that, as also noted by Williams in the book’s introduction, our understanding of our audiences is highly narrow. In fact, even where we take the time to tease out aspects of individual identities, *non*-participants in our community-based projects tend to go unnoticed and hence not understood.<sup>2</sup> Beresford takes this point further in his chapter, hinting that many audiences may be excluded by the very nature of the paperwork and bureaucracy involved in public archaeological initiatives. What is crucial here is an argument that May (2019), Fredheim (in prep.), and various other practitioners inside and outside of the discipline, have articulated; namely, that publics create themselves and, equally, they are created by our structural biases. We must come to recognise how these publics constitute and in what forms. Moreover, we then need to actively design for *critical* engagements amongst such known groups, as well as design means for understanding those who do not fit known moulds. If we do not, our contributions will stay narrow and unequal.

Indeed, we are currently setting ourselves up, following Ahmed’s (2012: 14) summary of the work of Alexander (2005), as conspirators in the ‘manufacture of cohesion’, creating ‘the impression of “more diversity” than “actually exists”.’ Stringfellow makes a comparable point in her chapter, noting that the very concept of community turns community archaeology into an exclusionary enterprise wherein intersectionality is ‘ignored or side-lined’ (p. 92). The possibilities of community archaeology, however, are perhaps best underscored by Fisher in her chapter on the engagement of homeless individuals with archaeology. Herein Fisher hints that the ‘normal’ operations of archaeology are actually not at all appropriate for our contemporary practice, and that it is through meaningful experiences with different audiences that we can recognise just how much – and in what ways – we must reform our typical methods and intents. Citing Kiddey (2014), Fisher writes, ‘it is essential to develop methodologies to work with people as they are, and not to expect them to conform to “normal” archaeological practice’ (p. 60). I think we might push her important argument even further to suggest that what public archaeology affords us – and therein what makes it essential to our basic expertise – is precisely this sense of how malformed is ‘normal’ archaeological practice in the present day. Taking public archaeology to its fullest, then, means using its critical insights as impetus to constructively revise the discipline of archaeology overall.

<sup>2</sup> Excellent examples of how we might begin to understand these non-participants can be found in the work of heritage practitioner Fredheim (in prep) and science communicator Emily Dawson (2019).

Gonzales (2020), reflecting on the role of museums in creating a more just world, notes the necessity of being able to talk openly about human issues—regardless of how troublesome and traumatic those issues may be. Her point is applicable far beyond the museological sector, as it centres upon dialogue and direct human-to-human communication as means to solve problems and galvanise change. I would like to suggest that this may also be what Barkman-Astles (pp. 184, 186) is addressing when, in his discussion of the application of social media, he calls on us to recognise that our aims should prioritise inspiration, conversation, ‘consistent, honest, open and public discourse’. Importantly, this is exactly what I believe *Public Archaeology: Arts of Engagement* provides to its readers. It models such openness and honesty both in what it communicates and in how it communicates – in its conscientious, evidence-led arguments, its multi-vocal composition, its respect of different presentational media and styles. This is a step change from what I experienced in Northern Ireland, where I believe that closed, homogeneous and coercive communication was allowed to prevail. For the first time in many years, then, I feel hopeful for the future of the discipline. Via its constructively critical approach, this volume provides us with a roadmap to how we might learn from the tensions of previous public archaeological projects, propose more radical and transformative methodologies, and therein grow a more reflexive and just practice now and for the future.

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# Introduction: Public Archaeologies as Arts of Engagement

Howard Williams

*By way of introduction to the book, this chapter sets out the principal recent developments and characteristics of public archaeology, focusing on the UK. By contextualising the chapters which originated as presentations in the 2017 student conference, as well as those contributions subsequently commissioned for the book, the specific theme of art/archaeology interactions in public archaeology is defined and its multiple facets are reviewed.*

## Introduction

This edited collection provides original perspectives on public archaeology's current practices and future potentials. It aims to respond to recent debates in public archaeology by both advancing existing discussions and identifying lacunae, inspired by the day conference of April 2017 *Archaeo-Engage: Engaging Communities in Archaeology*: the 2<sup>nd</sup> University of Chester Archaeology Student Conference. While a subsequent sister chapter reviews the conference itself and its transition into a publication (Williams *et al.* this volume), this introduction highlights the theme of art/archaeology interactions which emerged during the publication process. By 'art/archaeology' I here mean the multi-faceted ways by which art and archaeology are connected in public archaeological research. I argue that art/archaeology interactions inform and enhance strategies of public engagement, and that they are central to understanding archaeology's political and popular contemporary receptions and manifestations.

I specifically explore two related areas of art/archaeology intersections in public archaeology that permeate the contributions to this book:

- art of public archaeology;
- art as public archaeology.

Discussing projects that tackle either one or multiple of these themes, I show how public archaeology both fosters and critically evaluates the discipline's public and popular entanglements via visual and other artistic media. To set up the context for this discussion, I first define public archaeology in the UK today, and its principal challenges and concerns.

## Engaging communities with archaeology

Archaeology operates in and investigates societies with a powerful and engaging set of voices about the human past, the present and the future, addressing many key issues for contemporary societies, including climate change and resource scarcity, migration, death, disease and faith. Public archaeology encapsulates themes of economic, social, political, religious and environmental significance in the contemporary world (see Little 2012). Just as archaeology as a discipline brings together a host of specialisms which are fragmented and distributed across academic, not-for-profit, public and private companies (Little 2012), so is the study of 'public archaeology' today diverse and multi-faceted. Usefully and cogently, Moshenska (2017) identifies a series of ways by which UK public archaeology is manifest at present:

- Archaeologists working with the public;
- Archaeology by the public;
- Public sector archaeology;
- Archaeological education;
- Open archaeology;
- Popular archaeology;
- Academic public archaeology.

Public archaeology, like the discipline more broadly, has emerged and rapidly adapted to shifting political and economic environments (Jackson *et al.* 2014). It constitutes a cluster of different dimensions of archaeological theory and practice. Indeed, Grima's recent publication has advocated a 'multiple perspective model' for public archaeology, recognising the variety of approaches, attitudes and the needs of different audiences for archaeological ideas and practice (Grima 2016: 54). Like Moshenska, he regards public archaeology as a disciplinary practice and theoretical orientation for investigating the connections between the human past and contemporary society. Public archaeology is thus central to the evaluation and critique of archaeology in the contemporary world, including investigating the ways by which archaeologists engage with the public. While 'public archaeology' has been frequently perceived denigrated within the profession as a superficial add-on (Richardson *et al.* 2019), and remains perceived as peripheral to many archaeological endeavours outside the English-speaking world (Almansa Sánchez and Richardson 2015), in the UK at least it has become increasingly recognised as an integral aspect of archaeological endeavour. Therefore, if archaeology is essential to contemporary society, not a 'desirable extra' (Flatman 2012: 291), fostering sustainable and robust approaches to public archaeology is just as invaluable.

### **Public archaeology: creating and transforming communities**

A key debate for public archaeology in the UK today is how we conduct community engagement, and how we operate as a discipline, and as individual practitioners, in relation to different types of community. In this regard, at one level, 'community archaeology' is a sub-set of public archaeology – ('archaeology by the public', as defined above by Moshenska (2017)). However, its specific categorisation and parameters have also been intensely debated (Belford 2011; 2014; Isherwood 2012; Marshall 2002; Moser *et al.* 2002; Moshenska and Dhanjal 2012; Simpson 2008; 2009; Simpson and Williams 2008; Thomas 2017; Tully 2009). As Marshall (2002) suggests, it remains an opportunity for close and coherent fostering of community engagement and the co-production of archaeological knowledge (see also Ancarno *et al.* 2015). Responding to the rise of Native American protests against archaeologists in the US which led to the 1990 NAGPRA (Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act) legislation, there has been an increasing need for archaeologists in the US and elsewhere around the world to explicitly analyse their value and significance in relation to stakeholders (Little 2012).

Increasingly for the UK too, a bottom-up community-initiated/-driven archaeology is frequently regarded as preferable and enriching compared to professionally directed projects (see Faulkner 2009; Reid 2012). This is seen as a focus on empowerment and avoids what many projects are accused of: a tokenistic involvement of community members (e.g. Tully 2009; Thomas 2017). Moser *et al.* (2002), for instance, promote a multi-strand collaborative practice strategy, inspired by their work at Quseir, Egypt, to include:

- Communication and collaboration;
- Employment and training;
- Public presentation;
- Interviews and oral history;
- Education resources;
- Photographic and video archive;
- Community-controlled merchandising.

Strong involvement and participation by local communities is widely regarded as a positive way forward for all archaeological endeavours (Watkins 2012), at least where it is feasible, safe and affordable. This said, the definition of 'community', and the rhetoric of its deployment, can obscure complexities and nuanced interactions (Richardson and Almansa-Sánchez 2015: 201). Moreover, oft-derided 'top-down' projects can offer sustained professional support and guidance from the start to the finish of projects, helping with the delivery of feasible goals with positive outcomes for archaeological knowledge, the historic environment, the experiences for those participating, as well as fostering senses of place and identity (see Ainsworth 2015; Belford 2011; 2014; Nevell 2015). One of the critical limitations of

a bottom-up approach is that it may often accept the existence of static pre-existing communities as its points of reference. This in turn leads archaeological research to focus on attempting to satisfy existing perceived needs for archaeological engagement. Instead, carefully designed and implemented community archaeology projects involving close liaison between stakeholders and professional/academic archaeologists can harbour the capacity to transform community identities and perceptions of the past (Ancarno *et al.* 2015; Belford 2011; Carman 2011; Goldstein 2018). Moreover, close and sustained community dialogues can effectively enhance contributions to official records for the benefit of future generations their appreciation of and preservation of the historic environment (Hedge and Nash 2016). Community engagement might perhaps to better seen as future-orientated, rather than past- or present-focused.

In reality, public engagement is rarely primarily either top-down or bottom-up. Belford (2011; 2014) usefully employs Arnstein's ladder of citizen participation to evaluate how different relationships between community and professionals transpire. He identifies the power of community archaeology to develop social, economic and intellectual sustainability, the latter of which requires professional or academic guidance. Currently, most projects sit somewhere in the middle of that spectrum between 'bottom-up' and 'top-down', Belford argues. Moreover, we must be also mindful of the wide range of communities and the environments in which community engagements take place, making a 'one-size-fits-all' approach inadequate. For example, Williams and Williams (2007) identified the difficulties of gaining traction with communities with complex gravestone recording, but how community archaeology project can benefit of people in other, unexpected ways. Ainsworth (2015) has also advocated volunteer involvement in 'low-tech' non-invasive earthwork survey methods, thus identifying new archaeological resources and fostering awareness of the historic landscape (Ainsworth 2015; see also Belford 2014: 23). Coastal archaeology likewise offers a series of further examples where communities are involved in a range of capacities with heritage under threat from erosion and destruction. Examples of valuable community engagements through coastal and riverine archaeological work include the excavations of the early medieval cemetery at St Patrick's Chapel, Whitesands Bay, St Davids (Shiner *et al.* 2019), the Bronze Age and Iron Age sites investigated by the Shorewatch project in the Outer Hebrides and Shetland (Dawson 2016), the Thames Discovery programme (Cohen and Wragg 2017) and the ongoing innovative and geographically broad CITIZAN project.<sup>1</sup> Such professionally organised projects, whether site-based or landscape-orientated, reveal the potential of public participation following a 'citizen science' model: volunteers participate at multiple stages, including data-recording, data-entering, and participating in evaluative and interpretative procedures.

Public engagements in archaeological research is therefore phenomenal in its potential scope. Yet not only is there considerable untapped potential, effective negotiation with stakeholders in the UK still has a long way to go. This not only applies to dialogues with special interest groups, such as neo-Pagans and church authorities who have different concerns regarding the investigation of sacred sites, and the digging up of human remains in particular (Wallis and Blain 2011; Rathouse 2016), it also relates to a range of other groups and institutions with local, national and international interests in archaeological research and the historic environment (see McDavid 2002; Moser *et al.* 2002; Tully 2007). The complex and long-term relationships and conflicts between archaeologists and metal-detecting are a case in point: despite many challenges and problems, liaison with metal-detecting groups has been shown to be profitable and viable in the longer term, despite the need to retain advocacy against, and sustained criticism of, looting and the trade in antiquities (Bland 2004; Flatman *et al.* 2012; Bland *et al.* 2017). Flatman uses the discovery and investigation of the find-spot of the Staffordshire Hoard and its subsequent curation, analysis and display as a prominent UK example showing how 'licit' routes of engagement by amateurs can create extraordinary discoveries (Flatman *et al.* 2012: 76).

A further challenge is the frequently made assumption by archaeologists that communities exist as homogeneous entities. Indeed, archaeologists often still believe there is an undifferentiated 'public' or single 'community' within a fixed geographical setting, while ignoring the complexities of the groups participating in, and engaging with, archaeological projects (Moser *et al.* 2002). The variegated

<sup>1</sup> <https://citizan.org.uk/>

nature of responses to the excavation of human graves is a profitable illustration of this point. For the Oakington (Cambridgeshire) early Anglo-Saxon cemetery excavations, Sayer and Sayer (2016) emphasise the complexity of engagements with visitors and participants. This complements Goldstein's (2018) work focusing on the complex and careful negotiations with multiple stakeholder groups during and subsequent to excavations of the Orthodox Russian cemetery at Fort Ross (California, USA) (Goldstein 2018; see also Almansa Sánchez 2018: 203). The complexities of communities interested in human remains is effectively further explored for 20<sup>th</sup>-century conflict archaeology by Brown (2016). He identified the human remains retrieved by archaeologists from First World War conflict zones as a focal point in a nexus of interests and identities linking archaeologists (who include former soldiers), local communities, the deceased's family (if known), the military and regiment (if known), the nation (if discerned) and wider communities of amateur enthusiasts and interested parties. Indeed, the affinities of people to the past need not be framed in terms of biological ancestorhood. This is also revealed in Pearson and Jeffs' (2016) discussion of the responses and treatment of human remains retrieved during the excavation of a 'liberated African' cemetery on St Helena. Likewise, many neo-Pagan individuals and groups perceived spiritual, rather than (or alongside) biological, ties of ancestry with prehistoric British skeletons in museums (e.g. Giles and Williams 2016; Rathouse 2016). Similarly, the current commercial obsession of DNA-ancestry testing reveals the need for archaeologists to engage critically with claims of biological descent, many of which may be guided by uncritical concepts of race and ethnicity promoted by misleading commercial enterprises (see Booth 2018). In tackling these different 'communities', both real-world, digital or a mixture of the two, archaeologists must simultaneously offer critical evaluations of misunderstandings and misuses of archaeological knowledge whilst sensitively navigating rather than denouncing non-archaeological understandings of the historic environment (see also Thomas 2015).

### Politics and public archaeology

The above discussion has already touched on the inherent political nature of all archaeological research, yet it is important to reiterate that all of the subdivisions of public archaeology defined above by Moshenska (2017) are inherently political practices, attempting to tackle, critique and transform current society's experience and participation in archaeology. Current politics intersects with archaeology in almost every regards in the UK. Public archaeology's is not only about investigating and evaluating community engagements, its remit is also to identify and critique the many intersections between political agendas, discourses and organisations and the archaeological work and interpretations taking place as a result. This often involves tackling the legacies and narratives of archaeology's own imperial, colonial and nationalist past, as well as its current use and co-opting into nationalist and globalist paradigms (see Kohl and Fawcett 1995; Trigger 1984; Sommer 2017). The historic environment is the focus of complex contestations involving local, regional and national policies (e.g. Belford 2011). Indeed, government policies have not only encouraged, but also sometimes they have directed, public and community archaeology agendas, funding and policies (Simpson 2009; Jackson *et al.* 2014; Sayer 2014). Community archaeology is thus inherently political (Smith 2015), and tensions with indigenous groups in post-colonial environments find parallels in the UK in tensions and dialogues with neo-Pagans, some of whom have protested against the excavation and display of human remains (e.g. Smith 2015; Wallis and Blain 2011; Rathouse 2016).

Recent discussions of the interactions of archaeological knowledge and the political and public debates surrounding the cessation of the UK from the European Union ('Brexit') could be instructive in this regard (Bonacchi 2018; Brophy 2018). Academics cannot operate in a politics-free environment, nor can they always counter or control the use of their expertise and archaeological evidence for political ends. While future-proofing from political appropriation is impossible, Brophy (2018) rightly calls on archaeologists to be increasingly engaged as public intellectuals, contributing towards and debating their ideas beyond academic spheres (see also Tarlow and Nilsson Stutz 2013). This argument not only relates to the uses and misuses of archaeological ideas and narratives: Brexit is identified by Brophy as the latest threat to both the archaeological profession in the UK (e.g. Belford 2018) and the future of our built environment, as well as casting into sharp relief long-term trends in perceptions of Britain's past (Brophy 2018; see also Gardner 2017; Gardner and Harrison 2017; Richardson and Booth 2017). To be effective voices in challenging misuses of the past, particularly by populist politicians, we must

be willing to engage with debates over the long-term, argues Brophy (2018: 1655). Archaeologists must be responsible in their social media and public engagements, particularly against a broader European and global rise of right-wing appropriations of heritage and archaeology of which Brexit is but one manifestation (Niklasson and Hølleland 2018).

At local levels, archaeologists have long been encouraged to question and critique the imposition of authentic heritage discourses (Belford 2011; Carman 2011; Smith 2015), even when it means disagreements within the profession itself. As Flatman (2012) rightly highlights, not all public engagement is necessarily positive and constructive, and archaeologists can foster conflict and the oppression of identities and opportunities for local people as much as facilitate them. A key dimension here is the need for archaeologists to work sustainably and even to stay with projects that they worked with long after the fieldwork and post-excavation analysis has been completed, to advocate and challenge how the narratives are adapted and co-opted (Goldstein 2018). In this way, in some contexts, archaeological engagement with communities can constitute a form of positive political action on behalf of local people and their historic environment (Watkins 2012). Precisely how public archaeology engagements can be sustainable, and how the subdiscipline can evaluate its influence, is the next focus of our discussion.

### **Sustainability and evaluation of public archaeology**

There have been repeated calls for public archaeology as a whole to shift focus away from impact to evaluation and critique (Bonacchi 2018; Bonacchi *et al.* 2018; Isherwood 2015; Richardson and Almansa-Sánchez 2015: 203). Indeed, our ethics is undermined by existing limitations in our theory and methods, argue Richardson and Almansa-Sánchez (2015). They advocate that, rather than perpetuating the rhetoric of success, instead public archaeology must incorporate careful and embedded self-critiques of effective endeavours, as well as reflections on less successful strategies (see also Nevell 2015; Simpson and Williams 2008). Paul Belford (2011; 2014), notably, identified how this is possible in a UK context through negotiations between many different stakeholder groups. To achieve this, archaeologists have frequently voiced the aspiration for public archaeology to develop a clearer and robust theoretical framework, as well as a methodological consistency. This is a vision shared across real-world and digital public archaeologies, and has been most prominently articulated for post-colonial contexts where descendant communities are active (Marshall 2002; Moser *et al.* 2002; Perry and Beale 2015).

Indeed, public archaeology concerns more than working with communities or providing educational opportunities and skills; it also concerns the management and the construction of knowledge, and how we conceptualise, monetise and instrumentalise heritage in contemporary society (Richardson and Almansa-Sánchez 2015: 203). In this regard, it is not only about activities (Flatman *et al.* 2012), but long-term sustainable relationships and dialogues with communities on different scales and models (e.g. Faulkner 2009; Nevell 2015). Furthermore, as Belford highlights, community archaeology is concerned with fostering and transforming social memories, both of former places experienced and habited (Belford 2014: 22), but also broader senses of pastness and stories of origin (e.g. Jones 2015).

Goldstein (2018) outlines the need for long-term post-excavation dialogues with the community and other stakeholders, as well as before and during the project. The Cardiff-based CAER (Caerau and Ely Rediscovering) project claims sustainability not through perpetual fieldwork, but through, post-excavation analysis via adult learner courses (Ancarno *et al.* 2015). These instances reveal how a rich variety of practical and intellectual activities can perpetuate public archaeology projects within and beyond the communities in which they operate. This leads us to consider what constitutes 'social benefit' in public archaeology today.

### **Public archaeology and social benefit**

Archaeologists must remember that not everyone can and will engage with archaeology today, and we cannot presume everyone appreciates its benefits (Watkins 2012: 258). Archaeologists might wish to adapt itself to answering questions that specific stakeholder groups wish to answer and link to their agendas (Watkins 2012; see also Lewis 2014; Pudney 2017a and b), and whilst this might be seen as a

compromise it must be remembered that archaeology is, to a large degree, already client-funded or state-funded (through government, museums or universities).

The benefits for participants have become the focus of a range of studies. Recent discussions have focused on the innovative projects by Rachael Kiddey working with homeless people as both subjects and participants in archaeological research (Kiddey 2017), as well as those working with young offenders (Pudney 2017a and b; see also Belford 2014). Dig Greater Manchester has explicitly pursued the benefits of archaeological fieldwork as occupational therapy for those with learning disabilities (Grimsditch and Hawes 2015). Similarly, those with mental health issues were integrated as participants in survey work recording the earthworks of the medieval settlement of Studmarsh, Herefordshire as part of the Past in Mind project run by Herefordshire Mind (Lack 2014; Williams and Atkinson 2013). The Human Henge project is another initiative along similar lines: attempting to evaluate how engaging with archaeology might have mental health benefits (Heaslip and Darvill 2017). Working with those with both physical and mental health issues, Operation Nightingale has been lauded for its involvement of military personnel in archaeological fieldwork. In these instances, archaeologists are increasingly building in carefully designed mechanisms for supporting volunteers, but also evaluating the benefits upon participants (Finnegan 2016; see also Williams and Alexander this volume).

Broader evaluations by Neal (2015) and Sayer (2015) provide a provisional but valuable context for considering the benefits of physical activity, including digging and other routinised tasks, in mental well-being. Meanwhile many, including Ancarno *et al.* (2015: 125), emphasise the importance of evaluation to the co-production of archaeological knowledge; again, they promote the therapeutic dimensions of all manner of participation in archaeological practice. Yet digital engagement with archaeology (including the digital dimensions of many of the aforementioned projects), while widely discussed in terms of ethics and practice, has yet to be considered in detail in either therapeutic or social benefit terms. This is in spite of the vastly larger audiences possible through engagement with archaeological themes and topics identified not only in television documentaries but also through fictional films and historical dramas, as well as through digital resources and repositories, blogs, vlogs and podcasts disseminated via social media and static websites (e.g. Tong *et al.* 2015). Is physical engagement the primary mechanism for the social benefit for archaeology, or can digital/virtual mechanisms of engagement also possess and transform its social benefit?

### **Public archaeology's 'arts of engagement'**

Considering public archaeology's 'arts of engagement' cross-cuts the multiple strands of public archaeology and their aforementioned community engagements and political intersections. Likewise, issues of public archaeology's sustainability and evaluation, as well as its social benefit, are revealed by exploring the art/archaeology interface of public archaeology as a key dimension to current practice and future innovations (see Chittock and Valdez-Tullett 2016 for a recent discussion of key themes in art/archaeology connections).

Art is an important subject of archaeological investigation, as well as a key medium for public engagements with archaeology. Art is also a mechanism for the engagement itself, an arena for imagining the past, a mechanism for co-production and a metaphor for the creative and storytelling nature of the archaeological process. Art not only facilitates the recreation of past material cultures, built environments and landscapes for public engagement, but also it facilitates archaeological processes, practices and performances (Watson and Williams 2019; see also Cochrane and Russell 2007). As such, art can help mediate the interpretation of fragments and absences (Walsh and Williams 2019) as well as complex temporal sequences through the life-histories of artefacts and monuments (Evans and Williams 2019).

The archaeological process can incorporate art to its public engagements. For example, the Chester Amphitheatre project incorporated two artists in residence as one component of many other public engagement activities associated with this city centre excavation (Garner and Wilmott 2015: 78). Further projects do not regard art as a subsidiary element, but foreground art as a principal medium of public archaeology. The aforementioned CAER project focused on the media-stigmatised, economically and



socially deprived suburban housing estates of Cardiff around Caerau Hillfort (the largest prehistoric fortification in South Glamorgan). The project has become driven by objectives identified through meetings with the local community development agency, heritage institutions, schools and residents. The objectives addressed the need to transform negative associations with the communities, as well as the broader challenges faced by the communities. Art installations were part of an array of activities from geophysical surveys to dance performances, involving professional artist, Paul Evans, in all stages of the project, designing and facilitating engagement with heritage assets via eco-graffiti art installations, puppet shows and heritage trail designs, plus creating Iron Age-themed murals with local pupils (Ancarno *et al.* 2015). Pudney (2017b) discusses art as a key medium of involving young offenders in archaeological themes and subjects, where the art is the lasting legacy via a mural created by the participants.

Digital interfaces also have the potential to help facilitate access to, understanding of, and engagement with, a range of art, artefacts and monuments from past societies, including medieval church monuments (McEvoy 2018). In this regard, Was and Watson (2016) provide a useful case study of this approach in their report on the community art project in conjunction with Kilmartin Museum: *Living Symbols*. Inspired by fresh archaeological fieldwork, the first stage involved a range of participants (including primary school children) in sculpting designs in workshops with expert tuition and advice. This culminated in a multimedia installations at the museum (Was and Watson 2016). They suggest that this project constitutes an artistic and archaeological ‘union’.

Complementing the recording of ancient art and the creation of new artworks inspiring and co-creating public engagement, the efficacy of digital media are increasingly deployed by archaeologists as new virtual environments of art/archaeology interface. The phenomenal organic survival and visual immediacy of both individual artefacts and their archaeological contexts provided by the commercial archaeology project at Must Farm, Cambridgeshire, is less an example of community participation but rather of global public dissemination of archaeological data via social media. The Bronze Age discoveries can be accessed through a fixed website with dig and post-dig diaries with photographs and videos, as well as insights into the archaeological illustration of the conserved artefacts.<sup>2</sup> This example serves to reveal the complex world of online digital visual engagement that archaeologists find themselves operating within, promoting questions about the ethics and practice of digital engagement (Perry and Beale 2015; see also Williams and Atkin 2015). The effectiveness of Must Farm’s digital footprint finds a counterpoint in Romero Pellitero *et al.*’s (2018) discussion of 3D modelling of early medieval graves as a strategy of public engagement in the Pago Del Jaraff cemetery, and the range of co-creation projects that allow the public to record and contribution to digital repositories (e.g. Griffiths *et al.* 2015; Maxwell 2017). We can take this further and explore virtual worlds and their archaeologies, such as video games (Reinhard 2018), as critical media for public archaeologies of the future. These examples identify clearly that art/archaeological interfaces are set to be increasingly important for both real-world and digital public archaeology in coming decades.

### About the book

The discussion so far as set up the theoretical context and apparatus in which each contributing chapter sites. The select proceedings of the student’s research is the inspiration for this collection and six of the student group agreed to contribute their work and ideas to the development of chapters: Rachel Alexander; Aaron Clarke; Afnan Ezzeldin; Bryony Fisher; Bethan Humphries; and Shaun Parry. These were subject to peer-review and each chapter was systematically revised by the editors in liaison with the authors. These authored/co-authored student chapters have been combined with further contributions submitted by current and former postgraduate archaeology students of the Department and elsewhere, focusing on relevant themes of public archaeology. All papers have benefitted from multiple peer-review. We are also grateful to have the volume introduced and reviewed by two well-established voices in the fields of public archaeology and digital archaeology: Dr Sara Perry and Dr Seren Griffiths.

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.mustfarm.com/>

The chapters in this book enfold multiple dimensions of the aforementioned art/archaeology interactions. Following this Introduction and a review of the pedagogic and academic rationale for the conference and its translation into a book project (Williams *et al.*), the book is structured into three sections. First, 'The Art of Engagement: Strategies and Debates in Public Archaeology' focuses on the practice and performance of public archaeology in contemporary society: art here referring broadly to the discipline's methods and techniques. Here we present eight chapters – five with contributions by former Chester students (Parry; Humphries; Fisher; Williams and Alexander; Stringfellow) and others especially commissioned (Beresford; Hijazi *et al.*; Pudney). In addition, three of the chapters evaluate projects which have explicitly focused on art as either the subject of public engagement (Beresford; Griffiths *et al.*) or creative engagement (Pudney). Meanwhile, early medieval furnished burial assemblages are considered as part of an 'art' of creating martial interpretations of warriors past and present for public consumption (Williams and Alexander).

The second section, 'Art as Public Archaeology: Digital and Visual Media' considers artistic media as modes of communicating archaeological discoveries and ideas within and beyond the academy. There are six chapters, one by a former Chester student (Ezzeldin). The digital media tackled include blogs (Williams), comics (Swogger), podcasts (Boyle), film (Barkman-Astles; Duckworth) and video games (Ezzeldin).

The third and final section, 'Art as Public Archaeology' contains four chapters, each exploring projects that straddle the divide and deploy art as subject and medium. First is former a Chester student focusing on Playmobil (Clarke), the recording of graffiti (McInnes), rock art and comics (Brophy and Sackett); and art within community archaeology projects (Giles and Croucher).

The resulting collection is therefore innovative in both its range and content on public archaeology in the UK. As well as being distinctive and contemporary in its development from a student-led research conference and the venue in which it finally appears.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has identified art/archaeology interactions at the heart of public archaeology today, including: past art as a research focus for public archaeological research and debates; art/archaeological dialogues within archaeological practice; the arts as creative media for public engagement, participation and co-production in archaeological research; the investigation of contemporary artistic media in order to explore popular perceptions of the past, and art as an aspect and metaphor for the practice of public archaeology.

Almansa Sánchez (2018) has recently picked up the metaphor of Neil Acherson in suggesting that public archaeology is about the exploration of new territories and offering critical perspectives to enhance our social roles. This certainly applies to this volume's chosen field of interface between art and archaeology. Public archaeology as a critical theory of archaeology in contemporary society, needs to explore new territories, including innovative interactions between art and archaeology in real-world and digital realms, as well as build more robust theoretical frameworks and methodological applications. Moreover, as a publicly originated discipline about the interactions of past, present and future (Nilsson Stutz 2018), art/archaeological interactions must emerge as integral to the discipline, not as interesting add-on.

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