Chapter 2: Research Methods

2.1 Introduction

A methodology is "*fundamental to the construction of all forms of knowledge*" (Miller and Brewer 2003: 192). In order to achieve the thesis' aims and objectives, a number of different research methods were employed, which are described in this chapter. Essentially a combination of ethnographic and archival research, the research employed *triangulation*, enabling the examination of a "*problem from as many different methodological perspectives as possible*" (Denzin 1978a: 291). Ethnographers often employ triangulation to validate different assertions. As Hammersley states regarding this:

> "*If we accept that all kinds of data involve potential threats to validity, and that these may differ in likelihood across data types and sources, then by comparing data carrying different validity threats we may be able to make a more effective assessment of the likely truth of the claim.*"
>
> (Hammersley 1990: 84)

The research methods used for the thesis were literature review, archival research, questionnaire survey, and interviews. To a much lesser extent, one case study also employed other ethnographic methods – the Durobrivae (Water Newton) metal detecting rally. This is discussed later in the chapter. These methods were field observations, unstructured interviews, and additional questionnaire questions (something also carried out at the Nene Valley metal detecting rally). Some have argued that ethnographic observations always have an influence on the subject group, for example through the group's behaviour if aware of being observed (e.g. Hammersley and Atkinson 1995: 18). Hence care was taken when assessing the observation results, taking into account other factors such as the gender of the observers (see Chapter 7). However, as this was only a small part of the wider research project, it was not considered too challenging a problem for the thesis as a whole.

Thus, the triangulation included both qualitative and quantitative methods (Fink 1998: 148), the quantitative information coming through sections of the questionnaire surveys. This included postcode data from a sample of metal-detector users, which was analysed using the urban/rural indicator (GeoConvert 2008). Tables 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d, at the end of the chapter, assist in visualising how the methodologies relate to the different research objectives by tabulating this information, along with the sources of information, for each aim.

The analysis of primary sources used archival research methods. Historical context is essential for the better understanding of the complexity of current issues, and in understanding how they have come about. According to Denzin:

> *"No individual or group or organization exists in a temporal vacuum. Any situation which exists in the present can be fully understood only by tracing its chronological links through the use of history. For this reason human conduct* ***must*** *be viewed within a historical context."*
>
> (Denzin 1978b: 284)

Before describing the different research methods, the chapter discusses research ethics. The research methods are then introduced conceptually, and described in the contexts in which they were used in the thesis. Hence, the reviewing of the relevant literature, archival research, questionnaires, interviews and other approaches, are introduced and related to their role in the data collection.

2.2 Research ethics

The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Newcastle University (2007) provides ethical guidelines for researchers attached to the university. These were followed, "*to ensure that ethical considerations are integrated into thinking about research projects and dissertations*" (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences 2007: 1). Ethical requirements, such as confidentiality of respondents where requested, and the potential controversy of the subject matter were observed. All

individuals interviewed or sent questionnaires were informed about the aims and nature of the research.

In the case of obtaining consent from interviewees, written consent was not sought, largely because many of the interviews were conducted prior to the 2007 release of the ethics policy; however consent is implicit through email correspondence and through the interviewee's awareness of being recorded in interview. For a number of the shorter 'ethnographic interviews' at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) and Nene Valley metal detecting rallies, interviewees were recorded giving verbal consent for their comments to be used in research for the thesis. In the case of the written questionnaires, "*consent can be assumed to have been given*" through the act of response (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences 2007: 2).

In all cases of transcribed interviews, the interviewees received transcripts in order to see the record of the interview and check that they were still comfortable with their responses. This also allowed them to fill in gaps where they had been inaudible on the audio recording, or even, in some cases, send additional information. There was just one instance where an interview transcript was returned completely rewritten and with a demand to see the *entire* thesis for approval if the interview was to be included, and so a decision was made not to use that particular interview.

2.3 Literature review as a process

The purpose of the *literature review* as a process is to provide:

> "*…a systematic, explicit and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating and interpreting the existing body of recorded work produced by researchers, scholars and practitioners.*"
>
> (Fink 1998: 3)

The literature review was vital in helping to decide what direction the new research in the thesis should take, based on establishing what research had already taken place in

this field (Harlen and Schlapp 1998). As Oppenheim (2003: 7) observes, reviewing relevant literature is also a key preliminary stage of survey design. Looking at the relevant literature was essential to the development of both the questionnaires and to some of the questions selected for the interviews.

Different types of literature, including books, journals, conference papers, online sources and discussion forums, newspaper articles, academic publications, so-called 'grey literature[4]' and material written for the amateur metal detecting audience were consulted for the literature review. Many researchers carry out literature reviews systematically and electronically, with the increasing availability of reference databases to assist with searches (Fink 1998: 17, Miller and Brewer 2003: 171). However, some of the papers researched for the thesis were not necessarily stored online or in library resources, for example unpublished university dissertations, which are not easily accessible outside the university. Equally, metal detecting magazines and articles from the 1970s and 1980s cannot necessarily be found in reference collections. Many of these less-accessible sources were uncovered instead through personal communications during the research. For example, Frank Mellish, a veteran metal-detector user and founding member of the Detector Information Group (DIG), kindly gave a number of first-edition treasure hunting books and magazines from the 1970s (Fig. 2.1) to the researcher.

[4] 'Grey literature' includes project reports, consultancy-produced reviews, pamphlets, and leaflets.

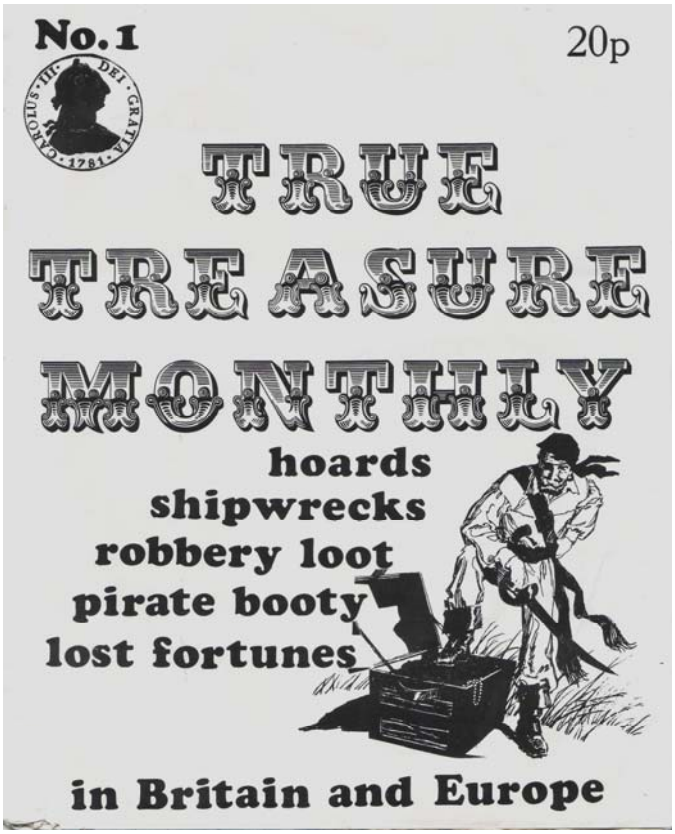

Figure 2.1 First edition of *True Treasure Monthly*, 1972

The discovery of this rare literature and archival material, through personal contacts developed, is not unlike the use of 'gatekeepers' in ethnographic field research, where a particular individual from the subject-community emerges, "*like a fairy godmother to help the forlorn ethnographer*" (Rock 2001: 34, cited in O'Reilly 2005: 90). They enable access through their own standing in that community. This certainly happened, in particular at the metal detecting rallies, discussed later in this chapter, where the help and endorsement from certain individuals were essential in encouraging further respondents to engage. The same can be said to have happened during the literature and archival research phases, although elusive written material, rather than community members, were the subjects to which access was enabled. In addition, Chapter 1 introduced the notion of 'social capital' (and see Field 2003; Schuller, Baron and Field 2000, and others for discussion of this term). If social capital is developed through personal and professional networks, it is then applicable to the methodology in the sense that the researcher gained access to certain information as a direct result of creating social capital with appropriate individuals. Hence, during the period of research for the thesis, social capital applied directly to the position of the researcher, as well as to the researched.

While there is no specific 'Literature Review' chapter in the thesis, the literature review process adds foundations to the introductory chapter, in the discussion of definitions of relevant terms, to state (and critique) what similar research in this field has already been carried out, and through establishing the theoretical contexts for the research. Chapter 3, too, relies primarily on evidence from the literature in order to illustrate some comparative examples from other countries. In fact, published and unpublished literature is crucial to all chapters of the thesis, often in support of, or supported by, information from personal communications and interviews. The thesis therefore incorporates results of the literature review throughout.

2.4 Primary sources and archival research

The historical context of the relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users is a crucial element of the research. Hence, archival research was essential. The study of archives can be regarded as an example of documentary-historical style research, where the focus is on artefacts (Miller and Crabtree 1992: 5). Chapters 4, 5, and 6 are entirely devoted to interpreting the history of the relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users in England and Wales, before the thesis analyses current trends and developments *in light of* this history. Primary sources are "*absolutely fundamental to history; without primary sources there would be no history*" (Marwick 1997: 16). These sources, especially where there are corroborating pieces of evidence referring to the same event or 'fact', are far more powerful in confirming that event, than the reference to this event in a secondary source, even if that secondary source's author is a recognised professional historian. Marwick (2001: 156) states that a PhD thesis must base itself largely on primary evidence in order to make new contributions to historical knowledge. Tosh (2006: 61) suggests that there are varying degrees of 'primary' sources, for example there might be accounts written close in time to an event, but by someone who has based their report "*entirely on hearsay*", while a first-hand account relayed many years later, for example in an autobiography, may also be problematic to categorise. Certainly, this may be the case for some of the interviews carried out in the thesis with individuals who were instrumental in the events analysed, but recollecting them years later. This raises the question about the potential role of some of the interviews as 'primary sources'. They

are ‘primary’, in the sense of being records of recollections from the people involved, but caution should be also be employed, so as to take into account the fact that the interviewees may not always remember events entirely accurately.

There have been other debates as to the nature of ‘primary’ versus ‘secondary’ sources. Jordanova (2006: 38-41) has argued in favour of the duplicity of some sources as both primary and secondary depending on how they are viewed and what is being researched. For example, a so-called ‘secondary’ source such as a history book written in retrospect to an event may also be viewed as ‘primary’ if the development of historical thought is the research topic (Jordanova 2006: 39). Viewing sources in this adjustable way has also been criticised (e.g. Marwick 2001: 155-156). However, for this thesis, published literature during and after the key periods researched, shed light on the pervading ideologies and views in archaeology, which in turn had an effect on the interactions between archaeologists and metal-detector users. Thus, they are essential to the contextual understanding of the events researched.

This research of the different contexts behind certain events follows *hermeneutic* analysis, where the social, cultural, and historical contexts of the subject being researched are taken into account. Ricoeur (1980: 43) summarises hermeneutics as “*the theory of the operations of understanding in their relation to the interpretation of texts*”. Applying the idea of hermeneutics to the observation of or interaction with individuals in a ‘grounded hermeneutic approach’, Addison (1992: 111) adds that a hermeneutic approach is “*not a method in the sense of a prescribed set of techniques that can be applied to any research project*”. However, it is the acknowledgement of social, cultural, and political contexts both to information and to its interpretation. With hermeneutic research too, bias is regarded as inevitable since “*hermeneutics itself puts us on guard against the illusion or pretension of neutrality*” (Ricoeur 1980: 43). Hermeneutics derives originally from Biblical studies, and traditionally focuses on the different possible meanings of a text beyond the most ‘apparent’ (Davies 2003: 111). However, the thesis also follows some empiricist methods, as Marwick (2001: 3) would argue all historical research should follow, where this is defined as “*the belief that true knowledge comes only from sensory experience*” (Davies 2003: 3). In other words, the archives and other material researched are used in the thesis as evidence for the turn of events and developments, rather than relying on myth,

opinion, or tradition (Jordanova 2006: 103). The analysis of opinions from interviews and questionnaires as well as from the published literature, adds another layer to the research and conclusions. History itself inevitably carries a speculative dimension (Jordanova 2006: 102). Hence, the understanding and acceptance of certain bias is embedded into the thesis and regarded as inevitable. It is very much in the tradition of post-processual theories employed in archaeology (e.g. Bender 1998) to make a point of understanding the standpoints, both of the evidence consulted and of the researcher herself.

Archives researched

A large section of the thesis relies on the study of archives. Tosh (2006: 79-83) discusses the availability of archives for historians and the public to research, for example through the establishment of the Public Record Office and county record offices in the UK. There can be challenges, however, when the desired archives are not official papers, but records from private individuals and businesses. While Government archives are "*at least centralised and accessible*" (Tosh 2006: 81), and usually at least on a basic level conserved, other archive sources may not be as well controlled or even as accessible. The Standing Conference on Archives and Museums (SCAM) (2007) recommends that museums have a policy on access to archives, the principle reason for keeping archives being to allow further research. However, it is also acceptable for a museum to withhold access to material relating to the organisation if considered sensitive, as confidentiality can be an issue (SCAM 2007). For charitable trusts, such as the CBA, the policies are different again. While openness is recommended, charity trustees in the UK are permitted discretion in what they decide can be made available to the public and to researchers, except for cases where there is a legal requirement, such as in the case of accounts (Charity Commission 2007). Therefore, enquiries had to be made in advance of the planned archival research phase, to make sure that the archives from the CBA would be available for research.

While access was granted even to politically sensitive records, the researcher had to agree to discretion in material relating to events that are more recent or containing confidential information. Close contact was maintained with the Director of the CBA to ensure that the organisation was comfortable with what evidence would contribute

to this thesis, and in order to stay in line with Newcastle University's ethical guidelines (Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences 2007, and see above). In the end, nothing key to the thesis had to be omitted. The material belonging to the CBA was primarily that which involved archaeologists and other heritage professionals, with specific understandings of and interactions with the archaeological heritage. It was essential to remain mindful of the principles of hermeneutics and the possibility of bias (as was equally the case with evidence originating from metal detecting sources).

It was believed that the archival material, kept at the CBA in York, had probably never been researched for an academic thesis before (Heyworth, *pers. comm.*, April 2004). This material formed the majority of the archival research. After considerable information concerning the looting of Wanborough was uncovered while researching the CBA archives, subsequent interviews of significant individuals concerning the site uncovered further archival material kept privately by members of the Surrey Archaeological Society, which was also analysed for Chapter 6.

The CBA archive collection includes private letters, memoranda, minutes of meetings, Government responses, contemporary newspaper articles, and other items relating to metal detecting and treasure hunting dating from the 1960s until the present day. The archive is not comprehensively catalogued and its storage is somewhat haphazard. However, without searching through every single box of the whole archive, it is believed by the researcher and CBA personnel, that the majority of material relevant to the PhD topic was studied. The possibility that not all material is complete is a common problem for archival research, and simply has to be taken into account (Murray Thomas 2003: 20). The CBA has hundreds of boxes of archival material from all periods of the organisation's activity. Archive boxes were selected if the box titles indicated that they might contain relevant material. An exhaustive search through all boxes, in case of stray information, was unfeasible. In total, seven archive boxes from the CBA were consulted and analysed. The boxes consulted for the thesis were labelled as follows:

- "Reports Law: Portable Antiquities Act. Exporting works of art"

- "Treasure Hunting Correspondence 1977 – Oct 1978 + Legal + Parliamentary" (*sic*.)
- "Export of Antiquities"
- "Antiquities Legislation. Drafts of Memo's by M. Barley & N. Stead. Comments by CBA Subcommittee 1965."
- "STOP Campaign 1980"
- "General Arc. Science. Treasure Trove, Grants
    - A2/25/2 Universities Thesis in Archaeology
    - A2/28 RAF. Arch. Groups
    - A2/29 Junior Membership for Exec in June 1970" (*sic*.)
- "Archaeology and Metal Detecting"

Limitations of the CBA material included that the archive material was incomplete, in as much that some of it has been incorrectly stored, and some papers had become illegible due to their condition. The issue of the completeness of the archive collection was also illustrated in the autumn of 2007 when Peter Fowler, CBA Secretary from 1970-74, uncovered further material in his private papers, originating from the CBA. This folder, titled "CBA + Metal detect 1969-70s", contained important early information about reactions to, and correspondences with, metal-detector users by archaeologists. It contained information demonstrating that metal detecting became popular earlier than many authors suggest (Fowler, *pers. comm.*, 16th October 2007). The folder was returned to Peter Fowler, with plans eventually for final deposition with the CBA (Fowler, *pers. comm.*, 19th May 2009). That the researcher was allowed access to this material again demonstrates the importance of developing social capital between the researcher and key individuals ('gatekeepers'), as does the access permitted to the files pertaining to Wanborough and the Surrey Archaeological Society.

In addition, posters and proposed leaflets by the archaeologist Brian Hope-Taylor, for the recording of archaeological material discovered by the public, dating from just after the Second World War, were also uncovered and analysed. The material was property of the CBA, but was stored at Bede's World museum in Jarrow. This storage occurred after the material's inclusion in the temporary exhibition *A Process of*

Discovery (see Sole 2005). At the time of writing the material was still at Bede's World, with no immediate plans for it to be moved, although there have been plans to tour the exhibition elsewhere. Another primary archival source used was Hansard, the official record of Parliamentary debates. This was an essential source for analysing relevant Bills such as the *Abinger Bill* (in Chapter 5) and the *Treasure Bill* (in Chapter 6).

Each piece of evidence uncovered in the archival research phase was analysed carefully, with the understanding that the background of its author (if known), and the circumstances around the source, affects the bias of the information given. In fact, as Jordanova (2006: 3) states, "*it is pointless to hold up an ideal – unbiased history – which is simply unobtainable*". Returning to the notion of hermeneutics introduced earlier, Denzin (2001: 74) describes the 'hermeneutic circle', which acknowledges not only the experiences and background of the subject, but also that the researcher "*is at the centre of this or her interpretations of that story*". This notion is very similar to reflexive methods employed in some post-processual archaeologies (e.g. Hodder 2001; Van Reybrouck and Jacobs 2006: 35), which take into account the backgrounds of the researchers in their interpretation of the archaeological site. It is taken as a given in the thesis, that any interpretation of historical material is based not only on the evidence available but also on the interpretations placed on that evidence by the researcher. Subjectivity is unavoidable.

A problem-oriented research approach was taken, where primary (and some secondary) sources were studied with a focus on the research aims and objectives, and archival material was analysed in terms of its bearing on the research subject (Tosh 2006: 89). This differs from the source-oriented approach, where the material uncovered by the researcher determines the direction of the research itself (Tosh 2006: 89). However with previously unpublished and undocumented material, the unexpected should always be expected, and this was expected to affect the direction of the thesis. The implications of such unanticipated discoveries were that the thesis needed, while being focussed on established research objectives, to retain a certain degree of flexibility in order to take advantage of this material. The research parameters of the aims and objectives were therefore open to modification during the archival research phase, depending on the information that was uncovered in the

archives. Thus, for example, the case study of the Romano-British temple site at Wanborough was added to the thesis, given the important and detailed information on the 1986 court case discovered in the CBA archives. Similarly, the researcher's employment at Bede's World led to the discovery that the Brian Hope-Taylor material was stored there.

Murray Thomas (2003: 17-31) describes the different ways in which archival material can be interpreted. 'Chronicling', listing the events in a narrative form, is employed as the principal interpretative method for Chapter 4, where a historical context and background is developed as a platform for understanding the events analysed in Chapters 5 and 6. In these chapters, the emergence and impact of metal detecting in the United Kingdom is covered. The use of narrative to demonstrate "*how a problem developed and is maintained*" is also advocated in grounded hermeneutic analysis (Addison 1992: 113). For the thesis, it is argued that the same narrative of a broader historical context, beyond the investigation of the everyday practices of participants, is relevant for the understanding of the problems posed by the research questions.

While research into the CBA archive resource has revealed an enormous quantity of relevant material, there remains the scope to research the issues uncovered even further. For example, there are relevant archives held by Rescue - The British Archaeological Trust, stored in Hertford, and Government records from the National Archives in Kew. Due to time factors, and the quantity of researchable material, such additional work was beyond the scope of this thesis but perhaps could form a separate enquiry in the future, possibly through research projects following on from the thesis. The case for further research in this area is presented as part of the conclusions drawn in Chapter 9.

2.5 Questionnaires and interviews

General Introduction

Quantitative and qualitative methodologies are acknowledged as the two general approaches adopted by the social sciences. According to Miller and Brewer (2003: 192):

> *"While they are not totally understandable as opposing approaches, they do adopt a very different position on the fundamentals of the relationship between ideas and evidence"*.
>
> (Miller and Brewer 2003: 192)

Quantitative data collection, enabling numerical measurement of information (Miller and Brewer 2003: 192), formed a component of the questionnaires. Flick (2002: 3-4) is critical of the usefulness of quantitative data alone for "*everyday questions and problems*", and of the impossibility to maintain objectivity, which some assume to exist in the formulation of such studies. Fielding and Fielding (1986) have discussed the merits and challenges of combining both qualitative and quantitative research as "*comparative methods*", reminding us that "*ultimately all methods of data collection are analysed 'qualitatively', in so far that the act of analysis is an interpretation*" (1986: 12). Hence, even quantitative research has to be acknowledged to have its roots in the social and cultural background of the researcher.

Both the interviews and questionnaires also collected *qualitative* data: "*an approach that stresses 'quality' not 'quantity', that is, social meanings rather than the collection of numerate statistical data*" (Miller and Brewer 2003: 238). As Flick asserts:

> "*The central ideas guiding qualitative research are different from those in the quantitative research. The essential features of qualitative research are the correct choice of appropriate methods and theories; the recognition and analysis of different perspectives; the researchers' reflections on their research as part of the process of knowledge production; and the variety of approaches and methods."*
>
> (Flick 2002: 4)

For the thesis, the questions in the surveys were informed by the research aims and objectives. Particularly in the case of the interviews, the questions were also informed by the information uncovered in the archival research phase, which was carried out

before most of the interviews and questionnaires. From an anthropological perspective, time spent with metal-detector users, in the context of club meetings and metal detecting rallies, and the interviews with 'key individuals' from metal detecting organizations, enhanced the researcher's ability to communicate with this particular community. The researcher did not spend the same amount of time with the 'subject' group as, for example, Bourgois (2002: 16) spent with his study of drug dealers and addicts. However, it can be argued here that an understanding of the culture of metal detecting, and even of the language and terminology used by metal-detector users (and a sense of when diplomacy would be fruitful), added strength to the research where interaction with this group was required.

Questionnaires

So-called 'closed questions' were formulated for the quantitative sections of the questionnaires, i.e. "*questions that can be answered by simply checking a box or circling the proper response from a set provided by the researcher*" (Fowler 1993: 56). The aim of these closed questions was to be unambiguous in their phrasing and in their response requirements, so as not to bias or confuse the answers (Fowler 1993: 87), and to provide a measurable empiricist aspect to the research results. Qualitative questions were also included in the questionnaires; in order to gain more detail on certain issues, for example the respondents' personal motivations to take part in their hobby if a metal-detector user. The groups targeted by questionnaire were:

- Metal-detector users (individuals participating in metal detecting rallies);
- Metal-detector users (club representatives);
- FLOs;
- Visitors to the *Buried Treasure* touring exhibition at the Hancock Museum, Newcastle upon Tyne.

The questionnaires' quantitative sections were processed using SPSS: the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences, and a "*powerful statistical analysis and reporting program*" (Rodeghier 1996: 7). This enabled the analysis and illustration of the quantitative results. The SPSS results are available on the CD at the end of the thesis,

although some information is removed, such as postcodes and names of respondents, in line with confidentiality and ethical policy.

The interpretation of individual qualitative comments, especially from a relatively large sample, is potentially problematic. This can be seen regularly in the interpretation of results, for example in museum project evaluations, where individual quotes are relied upon as evidence of the success or failure of the item being researched (e.g. Hollows 2004: 23). One could argue that singling out particular quotes for reproduction in reports or articles cannot tell the reader sufficiently about the overall picture of impressions, and may represent an intentional or unintentional bias on the part of the researcher. Other researchers have acknowledged difficulties in relating their qualitative data effectively when away from the context of the interview location (e.g. Moshenska 2007: 96). However, when done effectively, citing quotations from individual subjects may be interpreted as using an "*evocative argument*", when it is made clear that such an approach is used as "*the only option because we simply cannot hope to represent or reflect the social world*" (Mason 2002: 177). This "*evocative*", or "*illustrative*" approach (Mason 2002: 176), therefore, is used explicitly in the findings of the questionnaires. This is a technique used in other reports based on evidence from questionnaire surveys (e.g. Chitty and Edwards 2004; Edwards 2006).

Sampling for the questionnaires varied for each survey carried out. Rodeghier (1996: 28) describes the creation of a *sampling frame,* from which to select the sample of the target population. He lists two characteristics that researchers should try to ensure in a sampling frame. These are, that:

- *"It is actually created from the target population.*
- *It is as complete a list as possible of the elements of the population."*

(Rodeghier 1996: 28)

The population of FLOs was small enough to target in its entirety rather than as a sample: a full enumeration (Oppenheim 2003: 13), or census. This also applied to the

population of metal detecting clubs, to the extent that the online resources consulted were up to date and accurate. The questionnaires for FLOs and metal detecting clubs, unlike those that targeted museum visitors and individual metal-detector users at metal detecting rallies, were posted or emailed, and so the issue of response rates was more relevant. Rodeghier (1996: 32) suggests that, if the respondents, "*the group who actually answers the questionnaire*", form less than 70% or 80% of the original sampling frame, there is "*potentially a serious problem*". For example, the views of those who choose to respond may differ greatly from the views of those who choose not to. Measures were taken to encourage responses, for example enclosing stamped addressed envelopes for metal detecting club representatives, along with the information that senior members of both the NCMD and the FID were aware that the survey was taking place and were happy for it to do so. FLO questionnaires were sent electronically via a member of PAS staff initially, again in an attempt to assure FLOs of the validity of the research. The actual response rates and their implications are discussed later in this section.

Sampling of individual metal-detector users was to prove a more challenging prospect. Chapter 1 introduced the difficulties in establishing the exact population, and the range of opinions held about what this might be (although the thesis offers new conclusions about this total in Chapter 7). It is potentially difficult to define, as well as being huge. For example, at what stage is a metal-detector user classified as such? There may be individuals who own a metal detector but have only used it once or even never, or enthusiasts for the hobby who, due to time or other factors, have not actually been metal detecting for a number of years. There are likely plenty of metal-detector users too, who do not participate in metal detecting rallies or metal detecting clubs. However, the researcher decided to target individuals at metal detecting rallies, as these were controlled events where large numbers of metal-detector users could be accessed at once. The diversity of the metal-detector users present, in terms of their geographical origins, also seemed more useful than targeting specific metal detecting clubs, where higher concentrations of individuals from a specific region would be encountered. The analysis of the collected postcode data is described later in this chapter.

Although the thesis focuses on the English and Welsh situation, the decision was made to include responses from metal-detector users originating from other regions, such as Scotland, the Isle of Man and elsewhere overseas. This was because they were still carrying out their metal detecting in England, at least in the context of the rallies. Thus, they were subject to the legal and procedural systems operating in England and Wales. In essence, this formed a "*convenience sample*", relying "*upon contacting population members who are easily located and willing to participate*" (Rodeghier 1996: 26). In this case, the 'convenience sample' was the sample of metal-detector users present at selected metal detecting rallies who, when approached, were willing to participate in the survey. This might also be compared to "*cluster sampling*", or "*area sampling*" (Miller and Brewer 2003: 272), where specific geographical locations were chosen. However, because the attendees came from a wider geographical spread, even international in some cases, this offset the area effect of the cluster. 'Cluster sampling' often occurs simply from a matter of practicality (Miller and Brewer 2003: 271-272), and certainly did so in this case.

Student volunteers were recruited from the School of Historical Studies and the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies (ICCHS) at Newcastle University to assist with questionnaires, and with field notes in the case of the Durobrivae (Water Newton) metal detecting rally. The students were a combination of both undergraduates and postgraduates, and were recruited via an email notice through the university's Blackboard information system. They are acknowledged in the Acknowledgements section at the beginning of the thesis. In addition, six students known to the researcher also assisted with data collection at the Snape, Thornborough and Nene Valley metal detecting rallies. The researcher and student volunteers individually interviewed most of the sample of individual metal-detector users, although a small number filled in the questionnaires themselves. By necessity, the group questioned was only a sample of the total rally attendees, as it was not physically possible to talk to all metal-detector users at each rally. In addition, the sample only represented the metal-detector users who actually attend such rallies, as it is known from personal communications that there are some metal-detector users who never take part in rallies (Critchley, *pers. comm.*, 13th January 2007). Four metal detecting rallies were eventually selected in order to attain a wide selection of samples. The decision of which rallies to attend was affected by external factors, such

as the obtaining of permission to be present on site from the rally organisers, and the timing of the rallies to fit in with availability of the researcher and volunteers. The *original* intention was to attend the following rallies:

- Snape, North Yorkshire, 26th – 28th August 2006
- Thornborough, North Yorkshire, 7th – 9th September 2006
- Durobrivae (Water Newton), Cambridgeshire, 17th – 19th August 2007
- Fosse Way Charity Rally, Warwickshire, 23rd September 2007
- Brampton Rotary Club Rally, Cumbria, 6th April 2008
- Nene Valley, Cambridgeshire, 23rd-25th August 2008.

The same rally organiser ran the first three rallies and the last. The initial opportunity to attend these rallies came about through an invitation from the then PAS Finds Assistant for Yorkshire, who in ethnographic terms acted as a 'gatekeeper' (see above). The rally organiser then made it clear in informal conversations that access would be granted to any of his rallies in the future, as a level of trust had developed (Smith, *pers. comm.*, 17th April 2007). This again emphasises the sensitivity of the subject matter and the importance of developing a relationship of trust.

The Fosse Way Charity Rally in Warwickshire would have provided an opportunity to look comparatively at any differences in the way in which it was organised, being a charity rally, in contrast to the commercially run rallies in North Yorkshire and Cambridgeshire. Unfortunately, a suspected foot and mouth outbreak in the West Midlands only a few days before the rally date meant that the rally was cancelled as a precautionary measure. Plans were then made to attend another charity rally near Brampton in Cumbria in April 2008, but on this occasion attendance was precluded by unseasonal heavy snow, meaning that a decision had to be made not to attend due to the risks involved with transport. In August 2008, the opportunity arose to attend the Nene Valley Rally, which was held in the same area as the Durobrivae (Water Newton) Rally but with a different name, and with different recording methods to the 2007 rally (see Chapter 7 for analysis of these two rallies). Four rallies were attended as a result, and 262 individual questionnaires were collected, from which significant statistical and qualitative information was gathered. In addition, the Durobrivae

(Water Newton) rally was unusual for a number of reasons, discussed in Chapter 7. The format of the questionnaires used at all rallies is shown in Appendix 4. Appendices 5 and 6 show the additional questions asked at Durobrivae (Water Newton) and Nene Valley respectively.

Metal detecting club representatives were contacted for more quantifiable details about their clubs, such as how long they have been operating, how many members they had, and whether the club worked with PAS, the UKDFD or any other finds recording systems. Efforts were made to contact as many clubs as possible, through lists available on the websites of the NCMD and the FID. However, more clubs may exist that were not listed on these sites, and, certainly, it became clear that some of the clubs that were listed had not been in operation for a number of years. This indicated that the listings were out-of-date and that new clubs may have emerged that were not listed, possibly not having affiliation to the NCMD or the FID. That combined with anticipated non-response from some clubs indicated that this group would also be only a sample of the whole population of metal detecting clubs England and Wales. When Dobinson and Denison attempted a similar survey for their 1995 report, only 29 out of 231 known clubs contacted responded to their questionnaire. In the survey carried out for this thesis, 53 out of the 208 listed clubs contacted responded. The lower starting number, along with the response from a number that they no longer operated, may have indicated a decline in the popularity of the hobby, notwithstanding the number of clubs that were unknown to the researcher at the time of the survey. When one subtracts the six clubs where a response had come that the club was now obsolete, this indicated at least a 26.2% response rate, as compared to Dobinson and Denison's 12.6% (1995: 2). The true percentage may be even higher, discussed in Chapter 7, since the total number of metal detecting clubs in England and Wales may be lower than 202.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, some might not consider this estimated rate of 26.2% as a satisfactory rate (e.g. Rodeghier 1996), but it at least demonstrates a higher response than the 1995 survey. The still-low response rate may represent a combination of apathy on the part of clubs and inaccurate (at least in some cases) contact details from the metal detecting websites. Another possible explanation for non-response could be to interpret it as a statement of continued mistrust and

antagonism towards the archaeological community by some metal-detector users. As a measure to tackle this potential problem, the location of the researcher in a Cultural and Heritage Studies centre, rather than an archaeological department, was emphasised. The questionnaire and cover letter, which were sent by post or by email, depending on the contact details listed, are shown in Appendices 7 and 8. The results of this survey and the individual metal-detector users' survey are analysed in Chapter 7.

The FLOs and Trust Liaison Officers (in Wales) were easily located and contacted via the PAS web site (www.finds.org.uk), and were sent the questionnaire (Appendix 9) via email, with the assistance of the North East FLO. It was hoped, given the small population of FLOs (35 in England, 4 in Wales at the time of the survey's execution), that the response rate would have been close to 100% and that the results would represent the census, i.e. the entire population. This aspiration was added to by the fact that part of the work remit of FLOs is to assist with university research (Walton, *pers. comm.*, 22nd October 2003). In practice, only 21 out of the 39 FLO contacts, 54%, were returned. This was in part due to a number of regions experiencing a change over in staff, as well the probability that FLOs often received requests from university students for information, and may simply have been overwhelmed by such requests and not had time to respond. In addition, the Director of PAS subsequently suggested that a lot of the information that was asked for in the questionnaires could be obtained centrally (Bland, *pers. comm.*, 16th November 2006). This was certainly the case for some of the more objective questions, such as how many metal detecting clubs in the FLO's region were actively working with PAS. However, some of the qualitative questions were intended to gain individual opinions of the PAS staff, as they *perceived* the issues in their regions from direct experience. It was thus regrettable that this opportunity for collecting their views was not as fully realised as it could have been. In addition, some of the quantitative results showed some discrepancy between centrally held information and the figures given to this survey.

The low response rate is nonetheless understandable, as PAS staff are generally known to have exceptionally high workloads (Clark 2008: 28). The results from the questionnaires returned for this survey are analysed in Chapter 8, along with other

evidence for the performance of PAS from literature and interviews with key individuals.

The survey of museum visitors took advantage of *Buried Treasure*, the touring exhibition at the Hancock Museum, Newcastle, during May and June 2005. The exhibition was curated by the British Museum and themed largely around the work of PAS. The exhibition is described in more detail in Chapter 8. The questionnaire (Appendix 10) was approved by the museum Curator, and was used as an exit survey. The questions included both sections relevant to the thesis, and market survey information for the use of Tyne and Wear Museums, later passed on to the Curator. The original plan was to compare the results of this questionnaire survey with results from similar evaluation at other locations where *Buried Treasure* exhibited. However, in practice that plan was abandoned, as a visit to the marketing department of the British Museum revealed that the evaluation from the other host museums was limited and not focussed on similar issues. The results of this survey are analysed predominantly in Chapter 8, particularly in relation to wider public awareness about PAS and its functions.

Interviews with key individuals

The interviews of key individuals were qualitative, rather than quantitative. No "*structured survey instrument*" was used, and statistical answers were not collected, but rather a more "*flexible and open-ended*" (Miller and Brewer 2003: 166) structure was employed. This allowed the interviewee to express their views more fluidly. Specifically selected individuals were interviewed in order to enhance and elaborate on the data collected from the quantitative surveys, from the literature review and from the archival research. The groups interviewed roughly divide into four subgroups: metal-detector users; archaeologists; international, and other. Interviews were mostly recorded and transcribed, aside from a small number of chance opportunities and impromptu interviews where a recording device was not available. In these cases, notes were made. A small number of interviews took place via email, again as a matter of practicality. The interviews, dates, and way in which they were recorded are listed in Appendix 11.

The individual interviews carried out for this thesis were almost all what would classify as interviews of "*elites and professionals*" (Morton-Williams 1993: 188). In other words, the interviewees were specifically selected based on their knowledge and involvement in specific events or organisations. A number of interviews of metal-detector users may classify as *ethnographic interviews*, and this definition is discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

Interviewees were informed clearly about the purposes of the research project from the outset. The interviewer was mindful of pointing out the potential usefulness of the study to an issue affecting heritage professionals, amateur groups, individuals concerned with archaeology, and metal-detector users alike. This was done partly because presenting the survey as a useful forum for voicing opinions can increase the response rate (Morton-Williams 1993: 187-8).

Many of the targeted interviewees, described as 'key individuals', were identified through information gathered in the archival research phase. In addition, specific individuals were identified and interviewed because of the roles they played in relation to recent legislation (e.g. Richard Allan's role in pushing the *Dealing in Cultural Objects (Offences) Bill* through Parliament), relevant expertise, or because they belonged to particular organisations. Ackroyd and Hughes (1981: 71-73) discuss the extent to which interview structures can be standardised, and the extent to which the interviewer is able to vary the questions asked and their order. It was decided that, in the interests of collecting comparative information, each specific group of interviewees (metal-detector users[5] and archaeologists), were asked the same questions first (Section A) followed by specific questions (Section B) selected to investigate their individual roles. Interviewees were permitted to see these questions in advance of the interview if they wished, although only a small number took this option. A third section, Section C, was also included as a means of 'wrapping up' and allowing the interviewee to make any extra comments or revisit earlier topics of discussion if they wished to add more. A 'typical' set of interview questions can be seen in Appendix 12. Confidentiality had to be respected where requested, and in a

[5] For the purposes of the main body of interviews, the metal-detector users selected were classed as 'key individuals' due to their involvement with key organisations or events, such as the NCMD or FID, rather than the more casual metal-detector users interviewed in an 'ethnographic' interview format at metal detecting rallies and club meetings.

number of cases, sections of interviews were not physically recorded due to the sensitive nature of the topics discussed. As Ackroyd and Hughes state, interviewees:

> "*...must feel confident that their private remarks will not be disclosed to either the authorities or others who have no right to know what has transpired in a social research interview*".
>
> (Ackroyd and Hughes 1981: 85)

Given the nature of the history of relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users, the importance of not betraying the trust shown to the researcher, as well as the importance of the University's ethics guidelines, had to be remembered at all times.

Chapter 3 creates a broader context to the research by providing information about international examples both of illicit trade in antiquities and the ways in which archaeologists and metal-detector users interact. The interviews relating to international examples were selected to inform this chapter based on contacts available to the researcher, and knowledge via informal research, such as personal communications, of countries where metal detecting is an issue perceived as pertinent to archaeology. It can be argued, therefore, that 'convenience sampling' took place, as with the metal detecting rally questionnaires, consulting "*whatever people are most easily obtained*" (Czaja and Blair 1996: 6). This sometimes-undesirable survey practice was not a major problem for this particular section of the research, as the information gathered was not as central to the thesis as other surveys were, and is intended more as background contextual information to the main issues, contributing to Aim 1. Interviewees came from the United States of America (USA), the Netherlands, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. This was supplemented by literature and email communications pertaining to other international examples.

Apart from the interviews classified as 'ethnographic interviews,' described below, recorded interviews were transcribed and transferred to Nvivo software. This is qualitative research software, which enables management and interpretation of qualitative results, such as interview transcripts or literature samples. According to

QSR International (2007), who developed the Nvivo software, "*qualitative research software helps people to manage, shape and make sense of unstructured information...*" and includes, "*purpose built tools for classifying, sorting and arranging information*".

Another consideration to note, especially in the context of interviewing the metal-detector users and even possibly the archaeologists who had an active involvement in the anti-treasure hunting campaigns of previous decades, is Oppenheim's (2003: 211-212) notion of "*barriers*" to interviewees giving responses required for the study. In particular, the "*barrier of self-incrimination*", and the "*barrier of inadmissibility*" may be relevant when discussing sensitive subjects likely to reveal attitudes or experiences likely to produce "*guilt*" on the part of the interviewee. For example, the issue of nighthawking for a metal-detector user, or a negative view of metal-detector users held by an archaeologist in a current political climate where co-operation rather than antagonism is encouraged.

Ethnographic Interviews

In addition to the metal-detector users targeted for their involvement in key events relevant to the research, or due to their positions within national organisations, a small sample of other metal-detector users were also interviewed informally as part of the research carried out at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) metal detecting rally in August 2007. These interviews were less structured than in the case of the interviews of key individuals, in that the questions were not planned, but followed on from issues raised during the questionnaire survey. This followed O'Reilly's (2005: 148) guidelines to an 'ethnographic interview', where directed questions may first be used to lead to "*more informal discussions later*", based on the initial information from the more directed questions, in this case, the questionnaire contents. If an individual appeared to have more to say on certain issues highlighted in the questionnaire, such as working with archaeologists, or how this rally was different to others (or not), they were asked if they would be prepared to say more in a recorded conversation. Other people involved with this rally, including the farm manager and PAS staff, were also interviewed in a freestyle manner as opportunities presented themselves over the rally weekend. Unlike the case of the interviews of key individuals, the majority of these interviews are, where quoted, kept anonymous. This is because in some cases, names

were not given, but in many more because anonymity was requested as a condition for the interview by the interviewees. A verbal record was made that the researcher was using the interviews for academic research, and that the interviewee was aware of this and gave consent.

2.6 Other methods

Ethnographic techniques

As mentioned in the 'questionnaires' part of Section 2.5 of this chapter, for political and historical reasons, researching the relationships between archaeologists and metal-detector users is a sensitive matter, dealing with an issue that is highly emotive to those involved. While the primary focus of the thesis was on sociological techniques such as interviews and questionnaires, and on archival research, certain tools and features commonly employed in ethnographic research were also utilised, especially in the context of the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally, and a number of informal visits made to metal detecting clubs in the North East of England. The identification and contacting of 'gatekeepers', for example, were essential in these instances, as it was clear that many of the individuals eventually interviewed, would not have been willing to take part without introductions from these gatekeepers. For example, a perspective of the difficulties faced in organising the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally was obtained from the Farm Manager only after the rally organiser had vouched for the researcher. Equally, the Northumbrian Search Society in Durham was only accessible after an invitation from a prominent club member whose acquaintance was made by the researcher at the Snape metal detecting rally. Other sources of evidence, such as certain archival material, were revealed only through communication and meeting with certain key individuals. Thus, the roles of 'gatekeepers' must not be under-estimated in the thesis.

Ethnographic fieldwork techniques were employed at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally, not only in the 17 informal interviews of participants carried out, but also in that the student volunteers attending from Newcastle University were asked to keep field notes, based on a pre-decided set of guidelines (Giesen, *pers. comm.*, 15th August 2007), shown in Appendix 13. These field notes, while useful, had more limitations

than those made in a predominantly ethnographic research exercise due to time constraints. For example, the students received only one briefing meeting about their assignment before the rally, and they spent far less time among the subject group than would ideally be allotted. O'Reilly (2005: 93), for example, observes that anthropologists "*often advocate spending at least a year among the group*", rather than, in this case, one weekend.

Further questions (Appendix 5) were also added to the rally questionnaire for specific evaluation of the differing circumstances at the Durobrivae (Water Newton) rally. Parallels between the research carried out at the rally and the evaluation of community archaeology projects can be drawn. This is based on Isherwood's (*in prep.*) assertion that ethnographic techniques are the most effective approach for community archaeology evaluation. The results of the evaluation of the Durobrivae (Water Newton) metal detecting rally, along with the other tangible outcomes of the rally – a number of short articles by various authors and a feature on a primetime television programme – are discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

Urban/Rural Indicator analysis

Postcode data collected in the questionnaires of the individual metal-detector users at the metal detecting rallies was also subject to analysis. Postcodes are useful for gathering information about a number of characteristics related to a certain area, such as the electoral ward or health authority (EDINA 2008). It was decided that, while potentially much information can be discovered through postcode analysis, this would move away from the primary research objectives of the thesis. It is noted that now the data has been collected, more surveys could add to the existing dataset to form the subject of a future research project. For the purpose of the thesis, it was decided that the postcode dataset from the rally questionnaires could help to ascertain the background of the participants in terms of rural versus urban origin. For this, the urban/rural indicator was consulted, through GeoConvert (see http://geoconvert.mimas.ac.uk/). GeoConvert "*is an online geography matching and conversion tool for UK academics*" (GeoConvert 2008), with the facility for accessing information through look-up tables for specific postcodes. For the purposes of the thesis, the postcode data was collected for the urban/rural indicator. The urban/rural indicator consists of metadata relating to the area in which the postcode falls.

Urban/rural indicators exist for England and Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. As no postcodes were collected from Northern Ireland at the rallies attended, it was the England and Wales, and the Scotland classifications which were significant to the research. The values are discussed in Chapter 7.

The numerical values of the metadata used, 1-8, have different meanings depending on whether they apply to England and Wales, or Scotland. The analysis of the results considers this. In the instance of no data being available for the postcode, their response could not be used in the analysis. This occurred if a postcode was recorded (or given) inaccurately, or where a respondent had come from a different country or had refused to give their postcode. This also applied to the two respondents from the Isle of Man, as no urban/rural indicator information exists for the Isle of Man or the Channel Islands. In a few instances, the respondent disclosed only the first section of the postcode (e.g. 'NE1' as opposed to 'NE1 7RU'). In these instances, a similar but less specific look-up file was accessed through UKBORDERS (available www.edina.ac.uk/ukborders) to measure the urban/rural indicator for the wider geographical area. In cases where a value occurred unanimously, or at a rate of over 90%, it was added to the results for analysis. In the other cases, where the number of values was too diverse to make an estimate of the likely metadata value for the respondent, the response was not used.

2.7 Conclusions

The research for the thesis borrows from a number of different theoretical backgrounds, including hermeneutics and empiricism, and applying both qualitative and quantitative research methods. These were used in collaboration to explore all the aspects relevant to the gathering of data for the research aims and objectives.

As well as questionnaires and interviews, focus groups were originally considered as a research tool for the thesis. Originally called 'focussed interviews', focus groups have been employed in academic research projects, particularly in the social sciences, increasingly since the early 1940s (Stewart and Shamdasani 1990: 9), although others would argue that they are still under-used as a methodology (e.g. Gibbs 1997). They

are advantageous as a form of data collection because the researcher can "*draw upon respondents' attitudes, feelings, beliefs, experiences and reactions in a way in which would not be feasible using other methods*", such as interviews or questionnaires (Gibbs 1997: np). It was considered during the course of this thesis that use of focus groups would be a methodology well equipped to deal with collecting information from a specific group such as metal-detector users, who might be expected to be guarded at first about sharing their honest opinions. However, given that information from interviews, questionnaires, literature, and archives already was being used, it was decided that using focus groups as well would entail too much work in the time available and were not necessary when so much other data had already been collected. There is a case for the employment of focus groups in any further research resultant from the thesis, discussed in Chapter 9.

The varied nature of the research methods employed and data consulted reflects the nature of the thesis itself, analysing the impact of past events as well as developments in the present situation. These different methods are used to cross-reference with each other, following recommendations of triangulation, which were introduced at the beginning of the chapter, and relate to specific research aims and objectives. Table 1 at the end of Chapter 1 showed how the research methods relate to each chapter. Tables 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d, also at the end of Chapter 1, mapped out the aims and objectives with the research methods and sources specifically in detail. The next chapter provides a broader international context to the research, primarily through relevant literature and selected interviews with key individuals.