

Institution: Durham University
Unit of Assessment: 17A Geography, Environmental Studies and Archaeology
Title of case study: (2) Sharing expertise: community archaeology and training in north-east England
<p>1. Summary of the impact</p> <p>Archaeological enquiry in north-east England has been a strategic objective at the heart of our research vision for six decades. Responding to the erosion of the industrial identity of the region, academic staff working alongside our commercial unit Archaeological Services (ASDU) are enhancing community archaeology skills and projecting heritage as a core element of local identity. At our Binchester Field School we distill academic and commercial knowledge and best practice in a high-profile participatory research project that has generated spin-off bespoke practical workshops and structured programmes of co-enquiry, thereby empowering local communities to access their regional past.</p>
<p>2. Underpinning research</p> <p>Since 1993 we have integrated the expertise of our commercial unit Archaeological Services into a wide programme of research-driven field excavation throughout the world (eg. Nepal, Ukraine, Egypt). In north-east England, this has led to an unparalleled knowledge of our regional archaeology. Major research themes have been addressed, including the Iron Age to Roman and Roman to Medieval transitions (eg. excavations at Stanwick, Melsonby, Rock Castle and Ingram: Ref 1-Haselgrove; Wearmouth-Jarrow: Cramp), resulting in specialist knowledge of methodologies specific to regional challenges, for example the value of integrated, state-of-the-art techniques on multi-period sites (eg. Traprain Law: Haselgrove, Hale and ASDU), and the use of large-scale geophysical survey on Roman sites and their hinterlands (Whitley Castle: Ref 2-Hale).</p> <p>We have also set a modern agenda for community engagement, debating what kind of experiences of heritage the public want and deserve. The arrival of Skeates in 2000 created fresh input in terms of our participatory work: his book <i>Debating Archaeological Heritage</i> instigated debate about, and change in, our own community participation and delivery (Ref 3-Skeates). Through publication, we have realised the benefits of collaborative ventures in the completion of major multi-period projects founded on the premise of participatory work with local groups (eg. Ref 4-Gerrard-Shapwick, described by reviewers as ‘a great example of public archaeology’ and ‘a model for others to follow in their own communities’ http://www.amazon.co.uk/Interpreting-English-Village-Landscape-Community/dp/1905119453).</p> <p>In combination this expertise has positioned Durham Archaeology as the lead in a distinctive, regional programme of collaborative and participatory research. In 2002-6 we co-produced the North East Regional Research Framework for archaeology with Durham County Council (Gerrard and Petts– <i>Shared Visions</i> –http://www.durham.gov.uk/pages/Service.aspx?ServiceId=6666). This English Heritage-funded venture, drew on on 73 projects and publications by Durham staff and students. It established the future intellectual and practical framework for all sectors of the discipline, including curators, contractors and community groups and specifically responded to Durham research in calling for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • survey and excavation, on forts and associated civil settlements (p. 144); • the prioritisation of research on the Iron Age to Roman transition (p. 146–7); • long-term, large-scale projects capable of discerning continuities and discontinuities in the shaping of early medieval/medieval settlement patterns (p. 157); • a programme of participatory community projects addressing key research questions (pp. 229–36). <p>We responded by developing the Binchester International Field School (2008-) in partnership with the <i>Archaeological and Architectural Society of Durham and Northumberland</i> (AADNS) and Stanford University. This draws materially on Durham research to meet regional needs, using our</p>

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expertise in regionally-specific field methodologies (eg. Ref 2), to answer the big questions defined by our research on the Iron Age-Roman-Medieval transitions (eg. Ref 1) in a participatory framework shaped by our state-of-the-art understanding of successful pathways for community engagement (Ref 3 & 4). With the expertise of ASDU at its heart and closely involved from the outset, Binchester fully integrates the public in an ideal 'laboratory' that is exploring the chronologies and integration of civilian and military archaeology at a major fort and its civil settlement (Ref 5-Petts). Providing enhanced opportunities for public participation and training, including spin-off partnerships with local groups, Binchester is significantly widening and deepening public engagement, empowering local communities to access and benefit from their regional heritage.

Key researchers at Durham: **Haselgrove**, Lecturer-Professor, 1977-2005; **Hale**, Senior Geophysicist, Archaeological Services, 2000-13; **Skeates**, Lecturer then Reader, 2000-present; **Gerrard**, Lecturer-Professor, 2000-present; **Petts**, Lecturer, 2007-present.

3. References to the research

[Ref 1] **Haselgrove**, C. 1999. Iron Age Societies in Central Britain: retrospect and prospect. In B. Bevan (ed.). *Northern Exposure: interpretative devolution and the Iron Ages in Britain*, 253–278. Leicester Archaeology Monograph, 4. University of Leicester: Leicester. <http://dro.dur.ac.uk/8253/>

- 'Dr Haselgrove observes, in assessing the 14 other papers in Northern Exposure, that, north of the Midlands, Iron Age Britain has long been dismissed as a backwater. The core of this refreshing book comprises critical reviews of districts and regions, opening new approaches to evidence for social organization and symbolism as well as more traditional topics such as trade.' James, N. 2000. Among the New Books. *Antiquity* 74 (283): 224.

[Ref 2] **Hale**, D. 2009. *Whitley Castle, Tynedale, Northumberland: Geophysical Surveys*. Unpublished Archaeological Report 2149. Archaeological Services. Durham University. Hard copy housed at Durham University, Dept. of Archaeology.

- The survey is core to the publication of the full project by D. Went and S. Ainsworth as an English Heritage research report (2009. *Whitley Castle, Tynedale, Northumberland. An Archaeological Investigation of the Roman Fort and its Setting*. English Heritage Research Department Report Series no. 89). The extensive geophysical survey features as Figs 44–47 (pp. 121–4) and the acknowledgments thank and congratulate 'Duncan Hale and the team from Durham University...for the quality of the geophysical surveys cited in this report.' <http://services.english-heritage.org.uk/ResearchReportsPdfs/089-2009WEB.pdf>

[Ref 3] **Skeates**, R. 2000. *Debating the Archaeological Heritage*. London: Duckworth. Hard copy housed at Durham University, Dept. of Archaeology.

- 'A masterful summary of complex topics in an accessible format; highly recommended.' Review in *CHOICE* 39.3 (2000): 555.
- 'The most striking aspect of the book ... is the critical assessment he offers, with much plain speaking, of attitudes adopted by archaeologists towards heritage. Herein lies the book's main value, not least because its strictures are international.' Gathercole, P. 2001. Values, knowledge and ownership. *Antiquity* 75: 443–4.

[Ref 4] **Gerrard**, C. 2012. *Interpreting the English Village: Landscape and Community at Shapwick, Somerset*. Oxford: Windgather Press. Hard copy housed at Durham University, Dept. of Archaeology.

- Returned for RAE 2014.

[Ref 5] **Petts**, D. 2013. Military and Civilian: Reconfiguring the end of Roman Britain in the North. *European Journal of Archaeology* 16.2: 314–35.

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/1461957112Y.0000000030>

- REF return 2014.
- Anonymous peer review comments to *European Journal of Archaeology* in 2012: 'The paper

represents an impressive piece of research... its subject-matter is of regional and national importance. There is also an international dimension, because the transition from Roman provincial government to royal polities is poorly understood, particularly from the point of view of settlement patterns.'

Grants

Petts, D. 2011-13. (PI). *North-Eastern Heritage Partnership*. AHRC £9326.

4. Details of the impact

In 2007 we appointed David Petts as a Lecturer in North East Archaeology and Director of Research for ASDU. With a remit to respond to *Shared Visions* he developed a programme of co-productive, participatory research in the region which united academic, commercial and public interests. Recognised as a distinctive initiative by a Beacon North-East Fellowship award for community engagement (2012), Petts successfully reconnected local communities with their regional archaeology by cascading skills training to the public in three particular ways that draw materially on our research.

- (i) **Co-production** with the Archaeological and Architectural Society of Durham and Northumberland (AASDN) at Binchester Field School (2008-13) responds directly to the research priorities identified in *Shared Visions* and draws upon the participatory ethos advanced in our research (Ref 3) to open up an internationally important research excavation to over 600 regional volunteers. Public participants range in age from 16 to 60+, among them AASDN members, local schools, youth projects and the 'Know Your Hadrian's Wall' heritage initiative (Sources 1 & 2). An English Heritage capacity-building grant, secured with AASDN, has facilitated widening participation in training and development opportunities at the Field School (2010, £21,382: So1). Participants testify to acquiring new archaeological skills, allowing full engagement in all aspects of on-site investigation (eg. So3, Qu. 2: survey, recording, excavation); and they acknowledge improved well-being through opportunities for team-work, companionship and collaboration in an enterprise in which diversity and socio-economic inequalities are recognized (eg. So3, Qu. 4: working alongside like-minded people, the sharing of knowledge informally between staff and volunteers, opportunities to meet people and learn about other volunteer opportunities). An on-site blog runs concurrent with the project and allows volunteers and the wider public to follow daily progress. By helping people stay in touch, public involvement is broadened and deepened, with 82,762 hits during 2008-13 (So4). The partnership is 'exceptionally valued' by AASDN and 'important to the health and success of the society', a claim realised in the doubling of the society's membership since 2008-11 (159 new members). English Heritage recognise the initiative as having 'a long lasting and beneficial impact', 'transforming many local people from simple "consumers" of expert historical and archaeological knowledge into active participants in the production of their own history and archaeology' (So1).
- (ii) We have also developed a **distinctive suite of training opportunities**. The North-East Heritage Partnership (NEHP 2012-13), led by Petts and funded by the AHRC, has delivered a programme of skills and research training, widening and enhancing community knowledge and experience (So5). Eight hands-on events have provided tuition in research techniques eg. historic landscapes, buildings and human and animal remains. In parallel, 'master classes' have been delivered as spin-offs from Binchester, including sessions on geophysical prospection (Hale) and environmental and finds processing (ASDU). These make direct use of our research expertise, for example, large-scale geophysics at Whitley (Ref 2); Shapwick as a multi-period, village-based research project (Ref 4); our investigation of the Roman/early medieval transition (Ref 5); and we have deepened and enriched volunteer experience by making our equipment, facilities, expertise and research knowledge freely available. 50 individuals from 10 community groups have attended, acquiring new skills and knowledge (So6 and 7: techniques for standing building recording, use of historical archives, geophysics and post-excavation techniques). Informal systems of third-party training also disseminate expertise beyond the attendees; elected members of

local groups participated in the training workshops and then shared knowledge and practice with members of their heritage group (So6). NEHP training was also enhanced by free online training guides (www.ne-heritage.org.uk).

(iii) The participatory frameworks of Binchester and the NEHP initiative have stimulated an increased number of co-productive partnerships with local societies. These take our research expertise out to the community to provide bespoke training direct to on-going projects that are already in process (eg. delivery of training in combined geophysical prospection techniques; excavation and grant application writing at West Hagg, Swaledale). This draws significantly and materially on our research expertise (eg. Haselgrove (Ref 1): prehistoric-Roman transition; Hale (Ref 2): geophysics; Petts (Ref 5): Roman to medieval transition). With an in-kind contribution valued at £19,273, we supported 16 such programmes from 2008 to July 2013 (So8). Co-enquiry in 2012 with the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty has also facilitated the HLF-funded project 'Altogether Archaeology' and over 400 volunteers to date have benefitted from training in geophysical survey, expertise which has developed directly out of the research and commercial experience of Hale and others (So9).

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

[Source 1] Letter from Planning & Conservation Director North East, English Heritage. 17/05/13.

[Source 2] Letter from the Vice President, Architectural and Archaeological Society of Durham and Northumberland). 25/3/2013.

[Source 3] Summary notes from Binchester Focus Group – conducted by an external consultant on behalf of Durham Archaeology with participating volunteers. 13/03/13.

[Source 4] Roman Binchester Blog. <http://binchester.blogspot.co.uk/>. Google Analytics Screen Dump. 25/7/13.

[Source 5] Copy of AHRC grant application and programme of North East Heritage Partnership training workshops 2012-13.

[Source 6] Questionnaires and responses from NEHP and Binchester field school workshop attendees. 3/2013-7/2013.

[Source 7] Summary notes from NEHP Focus Group – conducted by an external consultant on behalf of Durham Archaeology with participants in the training sessions. 16/03/13.

[Source 8] Spreadsheet of co-productive partnerships with community groups 2008-13 specifying in-kind contributions and their value.

[Source 9] Letter from the Historic Environment Officer, North Pennines AONB Partnership, on the *Altogether Archaeology* initiative. 23/4/2013.