

THE VALUES OF COMMUNITY ARCHAEOLOGY: A COMPARATIVE ASSESSMENT

Submitted by Faye Alexandra Simpson, to the University of Exeter as a
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ABSTRACT

Does community archaeology work? Worldwide over the last decade, there has been a boom in projects utilising the popular phrase 'community archaeology'. These projects take many different forms, stretching from the public-face of research and developer-funded programmes to projects run by museums, archaeological units, universities and archaeological societies. Many of these projects are driven by the desire for archaeology to meet a range of perceived educational and social values in bringing about knowledge and awareness of the past in the present. They are also motivated by the desire to secure adequate funding for archaeological research. However, appropriate criteria and methodologies for evaluating the effectiveness of these projects have yet to be designed. This thesis sets out a methodology based on self-reflexivity and ethnology. It focuses on community excavations, in a range of contexts both in the UK and US. It assesses the values these projects produce for communities and evaluates what community archaeology actually does.

It concludes that community archaeology frequently fails to balance the desired outcomes of its stakeholders. It suffers from its short-term funding and, therefore, often lacks sustainability, which hampers its ability to produce and maintain values. Evaluation of projects should be qualitative as well as quantitative in establishing the cost effectiveness of projects. Subsequently, recommendations are made for future community archaeology project designs.

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