

CHRONICLE nearly the poorer, as we were threatened with legal action if we revealed our thoughts on the whereabouts of missing pages from the Winchester Bible. Also in the 'debate' category were 'Whose Art is it Anyway?', the pros and cons of returning Ashanti gold, Benin bronzes, etc. to their countries and, most contentious of all, the film 'The Metal Detectives'.

Our final group of films, showing the range, extent and importance of amateur archaeology, is based on our annual CHRONICLE Archaeology Award and shows the work of the award winners: from neolithic flint counting on Hampstead Heath to interpreting standing stones in Scotland, digging in Wales and recording WW2 pill boxes in England. Making a total of forty 50-minute films, over four years.

Whether CHRONICLE has been on the side of the angels during this period, whether we have correctly and adequately reflected what is new, what is important, and what is at issue in the world of archaeology, it is not for me to say. Whether we should, as has been suggested in some quarters, turn CHRONICLE into a 'Romer's Egypt' by using amateur enthusiasts as front people or whether, as has also been suggested in certain (BBC) quarters, we should be 'more like RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK', I very much doubt. However, what I can be certain of is that archaeology is more popular with the viewing public than sixteen years ago, and equally certain is that, however hard we try, we will never be as popular on BBC 2 as snooker.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND PUBLIC VALUES, WITH REFERENCE TO THE MAGAZINE
POPULAR ARCHAEOLOGY

Jonathan Burt

Many of the writings that deal with popular culture have tended to incorporate evaluative notions concerned with whether the phenomenon is debased or worthwhile. Those who have attacked it as debased have included both reactionary and radical writers, the former stressing the vulgarisation of traditional values, the latter seeing it as an opiate eroding a critical and active consciousness (Kando 1975; Gans 1974; Hebdige 1982). It is inevitable that much of the literature on the subject has this form, given that the scholastic world defines and arbitrates on cultural standards. The phrase, 'popular culture' itself reflects this stratification as well as pointing to the existence of cultural boundaries within society.

Obviously, within the magazine POPULAR ARCHAEOLOGY archaeologists are engaged in what one could call a public, as opposed to academic, discourse. In this they define their self-identity and prescribe what they see as correct archaeology in the social context. Whilst there is no necessary uniformity within archaeological practice itself, the idea of what is 'correct' is very much linked to a defence of the status of archaeology as a specialist discipline. As we shall see, these views often clash with those of other groups engaged in some form of related archaeological activity. In this paper I shall examine the nature of these competing views, especially as found in the pages of POPULAR ARCHAEOLOGY, and relate them historically and socially to the idea that the competing values are mutually exclusive.

Whilst the magazine is owned, and was conceived by a businessman, POPULAR ARCHAEOLOGY is edited and largely contributed to by professionals. In an early editorial it stated that it wished to bridge the gap between the professional and the amateur. "Popular Archaeology is largely written by professionals; but it is not written for professionals" (Magnusson 1979:3). Not all the articles reflect in any explicit way the conflicts alluded to above, but there are four groups which are especially relevant; these deal with: professionals and amateurs; major national archaeological events (specifically the Coppergate excavation at York and the Mary Rose); metal detecting; and the antiquities market. In other words these are articles that directly relate to the reader as a potential contributor of money and labour.

Against the background of financial cuts, POPULAR ARCHAEOLOGY responded by appealing to the restoration of the spirit of communal archaeology: the significant contributions

would come from the amateur. It was time to mobilise "the army of volunteers" (Magnusson 1979:3). At the same time two articles were published by Webster on the contribution amateurs could make in the field (Webster 1979a; 1979b). The first article, which related to field survey, emphasised the crucial importance of co-operation with professionals and the need for the amateur to be involved in some form of extra-mural activity or archaeological society. He added to this that the local archaeologist may be initially unsympathetic on the grounds that he has to deal "politely with a constant stream of enquiries from a basically ignorant lay public". There are other examples in POPULAR ARCHAEOLOGY of this kind of condescension including references to 'Joe and Hilda public' or the 'bingo-playing public' (Jones 1981:13; Cornish 1982b:14). Apart from inexcusable arrogance, it reflects a view of the public as an undifferentiated mass with frivolous concerns and a low I.Q. It is a parody of society derived from the perceived superiority of that culture generated by the professional researcher.

The second of Webster's articles specified the limits of the amateur's potential contribution on the grounds that amateurs lack continuity of practice and the necessary training for such modern, specialist techniques as recording, logging and sorting. It is highly significant that photography was identified as the one skill they could provide, deriving as it does from outside archaeology. The articles provide an interesting, and typical, expression of the professionalist attitude with its stress on specialised training, the impossibility of partaking in supervisory activity as an amateur, and the need to be part of a legitimate group. It implies a status that is achieved by undergoing a socially prescribed course of learning, and it is important that the entitlement bestowed is visibly legitimated by the idea of specialist skill.

The attack on this conception of professionalism has come from many quarters, with treasure hunters providing the most vitriolic and, at times, ridiculous examples. Within the debates over treasure hunting, one can detect two socially rooted positions. The first, originating from the professionalist doctrine defined above, stresses the contrast between the intrinsic value of the past as a common heritage and the possibility of appropriation for profit. The second is couched in the language of self-determination and free enterprise where commercial appropriation is seen as a right not a privilege.

It is important to mention here the historical origins of the combination of professionalism and the opposition to commerce. The nineteenth century view of professional status exactly replicates Webster's idea as well as incorporating an older gentlemanly ideal which was very much opposed to the vulgarity of middle class commerce. To the rising 'class' of

Victorian intellectuals who were transforming the idea of scholarly culture as principles that provided moral guidance for society into a separate sphere studied scientifically for its own sake, the ideal was a necessary one. It is this structure that we have inherited and I shall return to it at the end (Weiner 1981; Heyck 1982).

It is inevitable that what is seen as commercial enterprise should challenge those such as intellectuals whose identity and status rests on the existence of a 'high' culture that sets itself above the financially based populist culture. Rahtz reflects this intellectual stance well when he writes in POPULAR ARCHAEOLOGY that "What is certain is that no-one does archaeology for money" (Rahtz 1980:43). It is significant in the light of this, that Fowler should state that treasure hunting should be proved socially, rather than academically, unacceptable. It is after all a social position that is at stake (Fowler 1977:188).

In another contribution to the magazine, Robert Erskine (1982) neatly distinguishes between socially acceptable and unacceptable forms of collecting behaviour: love of art and a stronger than usual sense of history were worthy justifications; social cachet and, 'least dignified of all', financial investment were not. He admits that now he collects antiquities of low commercial value, looking down 'patronisingly' on those who pay huge sums. Similar notions were further reiterated in the complaints to POPULAR ARCHAEOLOGY concerning antiquities advertising.¹

Turning to treasure hunting, the arguments marshalled in its favour centre, as I have mentioned, on self determination and a view of the archaeological heritage generalised from particular ideological interpretations of the role of culture and cultural knowledge in British society. The overtones are strongly utilitarian in that archaeology does nothing for people in the street or the general progress of the nation:

a deeper knowledge of it [archaeology] is not going to affect our future lives...It is not going to save the universe, or further medical research. There is a growing body of medical evidence on the other hand, that metal detecting is one of the finest post-operative hobbies that anyone can take up. (Payne 1980:6-7)

Progress can also mean giving in to modern market forces and letting in a new era of public participatory activity. In this sense treasure hunting cannot be seen as misunderstanding of the 'true role' of archaeology as Dave Crowther has put it, as it is the 'true role' that is being contested (Crowther 1978, this volume).

Another aspect of treasure hunting is that it is essentially a leisure activity. Since the eighteenth century recreation has largely been transformed by social and economic change: in the Industrial Revolution the need for a different approach to leisure was motivated by changes in labour discipline. There is no doubt that dominant classes have deemed it wise to influence these transformations: the control of free time is as important as that of labour time. It is perhaps of relevance here that those Victorians who saw leisure as an area for class reconciliation failed in achieving it. The working class accepted middle class sponsorship but invested sports and so forth with their own sets of shared values. Those Victorian elites who made municipal provision for leisure did not do so as a response to popular demand but rather were motivated to prescribe the structure of free time for the lower classes (Cunningham 1980; Malcolmson 1973).

It is not surprising, therefore, that certain types of leisure activity should embody deeper social conflicts. As Kaplan has shown, the features of recreation include a minimum of involvement in social role obligations and a psychological perception of freedom (Kaplan 1960). Ideas of freedom in the face of bureaucratic and professional opposition are endlessly reiterated in the treasure hunting literature. Two examples are: "public" means 'public'... Where he asked is Magna Carta?" (Hill 1978:5), or "we fought a war for the freedom of the individual and a popular slogan was 'dig for victory'..." (Nisbet 1978:57). It may well be that the differences between this activity and professional archaeological practice negate the possibility of any extensive cooperation.

The next theme that one comes across within POPULAR ARCHAEOLOGY is rooted in the ideology of business and at times equates well with the notions of the Conservative right. Here archaeology is seen as value for ratepayers' money, whilst the subject's future should be seen in terms of a commercial operation. POPULAR ARCHAEOLOGY greeted Heseltine's proposals with an editorial heading: "Two cheers for British Archaeology Ltd." (Thomas and Jones 1982:2). The magazine's owner, Graham Thomas, goes on to relish the prospect of the lifting of the dead and unimaginative hand of the top civil service which has prevented the proper exploitation of the British heritage. Later on in 1982, POPULAR ARCHAEOLOGY covered a conference in Oxford which dealt with Heseltine's new proposals:

Archaeology faces a changing and demanding future. At the dawn of this new and exciting era Popular Archaeology looks forward to fulfilling its part in media's great role. (Cornish 1982a:3)

This is inevitable given the magazine's dependence on commercial priorities. The important question is to what extent such a treatment affects the structure of archaeological practice and the way the past is presented as a historical record. As we shall see with Coppergate and the Mary Rose, the effect is considerable.

Several contributors also make the point that archaeological cuts are to be seen as a blessing in disguise. The time has come for a return of the amateur and a new doctrine of self-help; the subject will have to account for itself. As a graduate of one university put it, "Archaeology must become 'immediate' which in today's terms means that it must be translatable into hard cash" (Haigh 1982:42). This is put more virulently but with the same background ideas by another contributor:

Close down this State archaeology 'circus'... and put all archaeology back into the hands of AMATEURS who, for a mere fraction of the cost of Nationalised Archaeology, will give the public what the public wants. (McClellan 1982:42)

The language of The Way Forward fits in well:

The opportunity to apply an imaginative approach to presentation and to the commercial operation, using the most modern management and control techniques... which would lead to a better service to the public as well as tapping the abundant goodwill in the heritage field through private donations and voluntary assistance. (Department of the Environment 1982)

The significance of this, at least analytically, is that here archaeological practice and organisation is being embedded in a set of values that links commerce to a doctrine of individualist and self-determining amateurism. This is especially celebrated in Hudson's The Social History of Archaeology, in which he claimed that amateurism gives British archaeology its unique democratic quality, whilst metal detectors are seen as examples of free enterprise; as he puts it, 'disturbingly democratic'. Furthermore, it is telling that he should liken excavation to military organisation (Hudson 1981:6-9). In POPULAR ARCHAEOLOGY Hudson describes his Good Museums Guide as an important symbol for the consumer. Significantly, it was put together by volunteers and thus exhibited the same qualities as the Good Food Guide. The 'closed shop', by which he means professional curators, should be fought unremittently

(Hudson 1981:38-41).

Finally we come to two examples in POPULAR ARCHAEOLOGY of recent and extensively marketed archaeological events: Coppergate and the Mary Rose. Both of these share similar characteristics: the existence of commercial marketing organisations and strong ideological overtones in their presentation to the public. The Mary Rose combines the two symbols of royalty and maritime power, the latter being the key to Britain's ascendancy as a trading empire. It is significant that some 60% of the financial resources for raising the ship came from private business. Judging by the souvenir publications they obviously recognised the considerable advertising possibilities. In Portsmouth in the autumn of 1982 a 'Court of the Mary Rose' was set up with Portsmouth leading local groups comprised mostly of businessmen, industrialists, and members of local government. Each is committed to raising £50,000. The souvenir company is being transformed into a major international mail order concern offering the consumer a range of goods from replica pocket sundials to 5m cables from the lifting frame -- "a heavyweight memento of the great day" (Livingstone 1980:12) -- to pieces of wood from the wreck set in perspex.

Coppergate has a similar souvenir industry and was also marketed by presenting the Vikings with a specific image: traders. Magnus Magnusson, in a series of articles in POPULAR ARCHAEOLOGY, made explicit links between the past and national consciousness:

The more I've thought about this, the more I'm convinced that, whether consciously or unconsciously, people of Britain are seeing the Vikings as entrepreneurs of trade that they themselves would like to be -- men who created new markets, opened new horizons to east and west -- the sort of men who might even have been able to sell British Leyland cars abroad! (Magnusson 1980:12)

Such ideas were certainly saleable in Britain in 1980.

Within this paper I have not committed myself to a judgement either in favour of elitist professionalism or the commercial individualism I have described. A way out of these types of conflict would necessitate a profound restructuring of our own culture. I think one can identify a cultural dualism here, at least at the level at which professional archaeologists or treasure hunters articulate and defend their status and 'rights' to the past. On the one hand, the scholastic culture -- symbolised, at least ideologically, in its rejection of market values -- sets itself above the day-to-day, whilst popular

culture does not. Scholastic culture's other essential aspect is that it is self-justifying and does not necessarily need validation for explicit social reasons. That is not to say that archaeologists don't do so.

This type of distinction between public and scholastic attitudes to culture is paralleled in Bourdieu's "The Aristocracy of Culture":

There are relationships between groups maintaining different, and even antagonistic, relations to culture, depending on the conditions in which they acquired their cultural capital and the markets in which they can derive most profit from it. (Bourdieu 1980:225)

His survey of aesthetic attitudes across different classes in France reproduced the divisions I have described. My final concluding point is a pessimistic one and that is whether different groups wish (or even can) overcome this dualism. I suspect they would rather not.

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Note

1. See the Cambridge letter (Popular Archaeology 3(10):14): "Too many already believe that archaeologists search for treasure and excavate for financial gain. Popular Archaeology has a social responsibility to inform the public about the aims and achievements of archaeology."

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MUSEUMS AND PEOPLE

Peter Gathercole

In the introduction to the catalogue of his collection published in 1656, John Tradescant set out the basic principles by which museums have functioned, time out of mind:

Now for the materialls themselves I reduce them into two sorts; one Naturall, of which some are more familiarly known and named amongst us, as divers sorts of Birds, foure-footed Beasts and Fishes, to whom I have given usual English names. Others are lesse familiar, and as yet unfitted with apt English termes, as the shell-Creatures, Insects, Mine-ralls, Outlandish-Fruits, And the like, which are part of the Materia Medica; (Encroachers upon that faculty, may try how they can crack such shells). The other sort is Artificialls, as Utensills, Householdstuffe, Habits, Instruments of Warre used by several Nations, rare curiosities of Art, etc. These are also expressed in English (saving the Coynes, which would vary but little if Translated) for the ready satisfying whomsoever may desire a view thereof (Tradescant 1656:a2 - a3).

The emphasis which Tradescant placed on the need to reduce his materials to order, and to identify them in the English language, "for the ready satisfying whomsoever may desire a view thereof" makes good sense. Museums have always been concerned with two basic tasks: to maintain collections in order not just physically, but also in relation to some philosophical system; and to explain them to the visitor. Obviously, these tasks are not always in harmony with each other. To preserve something may mean hiding it away, and in any case few museums have the resources to display everything they have in custody. Selection, traditionally the prerogative of curatorial staff, determines both content and form of display. It has generally operated in the light of answers to two questions put by curators: "What do we think visitors need to know?" and "How much space have we to satisfy that need?" I am perhaps putting the matter rather bleakly, but I wish to stress the point that museum display is a very limited form of public education, especially when one bears in mind that, historically, museums were regarded, and often deliberately designed, as grand secular temples to the glorification of knowledge. The selection of material to publicly illustrate this knowledge is done by a group of scholars trained, as a first priority, to maintain and extend collections. It is no slur on the museum profession to say that people come second.

(Archaeological Review from Cambridge 2:1 (1983))