

What is Community heritage and how is it practised in Britain today?

When acknowledging the world of archaeology we also have to consider the development of community heritage and the involvement the system has towards the archaeological profession. Community heritage is a system which allows the public to become involved and engage within their own local history and their own culture. The arrangement of community heritage is not just reviving the history of a specific location, but it can also involve activities such as performing old forgotten trades or rather saving a building which needs desperate care. Community heritage allows the local community to donate their time and energy into the environment and sustain their history, which allows the economy to grow and tourism to increase within the locations, helping the community with the duty of care towards their heritage and collectively the town.

Throughout this essay community heritage will be discussed in a means which focuses on the advantages and disadvantages of such organisations, while also discussing how the system of community heritage is developed and how it is used in today's society. While exploring the advantages and disadvantages of community heritage there will be a historical discussion on how other academics such as Start (1999) explore the idea of community heritage and their views amongst the topic. However with the notion of community heritage being of a 20th century idea, there is little academic literature surrounding this topic. The argument that will be portrayed within this essay involves the analysis of the public themselves and what effect the concept of community heritage has on the well-being of the local population. Furthermore, from the analysis of community heritage, the examination of how the community practises this idea of community heritage has to be observed. This will be done through analysing the influence from different organisations which contribute to the funding of such community projects and how each area considers community heritage differently to another.

For the purpose of this essay the main organisation which will be explored is the Aylsham Roman Project (ARP) which is located in Norfolk, England in a small village called Aylsham. The Aylsham Roman Project, created by Peter Purdy the owner of the estate, contacted Britannia Archaeology who are archaeologists based in East Anglia to help with uncovering the history which was once covering the lands at Aylsham. The condition with this job offer was to make the operation open to the Aylsham public by allowing them to join in on the archaeological dig. The Aylsham Roman Project has been operational since 2016 and has continued bringing in new members of the public each year. The community project allows for other activities to be involved as well as the archaeological dig itself. Therefore all these extra activities allows for the public to come together and help each other out and allowing new connections to emerge and allowing the community of Aylsham to gain as much knowledge as possible about the history which once was occupying Aylsham.

What is Community Heritage?

Defining community and heritage separately allows for the understanding of them when placed together. *Community* is defined as a 'group of people living within the same geographical area or have something in common' (Smith. 2001). However the meaning of community can also have other definitions but for the case of this paper we can understand community to be a group of people living in the same place or have common interests. Trying to define heritage we can see that '*heritage* is a variety of our inherited traditions, monuments, objects and cultures' (UMassAmherst. n.d). Heritage is our story, past and present so looking after our heritage is important. According to Start (1999: 52) community heritage is wholly dependent on where you are in relation to the location across the UK. Community heritage constitutes to anything that makes the location unique, whether that be historic buildings, old trades that have become revived or discovering the origins of the location. This is why Start (1999) describes community heritage in a way that does not necessarily define the term, as both terms are constantly changing. Due to the variety of different types of community heritage, the history within the communities are 'often in danger of becoming forgotten or lost' (Heritage Lottery Fund. 2018a) and with the loss of the community heritage the public are also at a loss of who they are.

With different organisations across the UK helping to fund these historic elements the community heritage is becoming more developed and acknowledged across the UK's economical sector. Analysing different types of community heritage and the involvement that occurs within the public shows that the community heritage does not just mean the involvement on site but includes the presentation of such information to students in school or college and social groups. Community heritage also allows other members of the public who also own their own businesses to become involved such as artists working among a community archaeological dig, allowing the artist to create an idea of what the site would have looked like in its original state. The term of community heritage is very vague considering there is a variety of organisations projecting this practise. Defining community heritage allows the public to become involved within the historical studies of their communities via a variety of practices. Community heritage also covers the term community archaeology which was first termed in 'Leicestershire in the late 1980's' (Start. 1999: 52).

Community archaeology became a way in which to involve the ordinary people within archaeology as in the 1990's that right was taken away. Start (1999) explains that during the 1960's local community archaeology was done by amateurs but became a well-known activity during the time, this led to the 1970's development of rescue archaeology which due to the development of buildings and other works was needed to secure the preservation of archaeological material. This then led to the field of archaeology as we know it which was developing through the 20th century into what it is today, however the development of such a practise did not come without its problems. The development of the professional archaeological field did not leave room for the public to take part or to understand their own heritage. The development of today's third sector has allowed more and more involvement within the public eye and teaches the community about their own history.

The responsibility for the community heritage was once placed within the hands of the community themselves, however this practise did not last. During the 1979-1990 British prime minister elections the archaeologists became uncertain of their future and their responsibility for the historic environment. Start (1999: 51) explains that Margaret Thatcher's 'polluter pays' policy left the archaeologists in limbo until the 1990's when the responsibility the archaeologists once had, passed over to the property developers. From this change in law the British heritage was taken away from the communities as the developers wanted to develop community's lands for profit. During this time and the years following 1990, community heritage was at its worst, with the archaeologists being under order from the developers and timescales to complete the contracted work. This decrease in community archaeology and the decrease in restoration of the community heritage bought a familiar scene to the UK which was that of the past being disconnected with that of the present. Since the 1980's the heritage debate had been divided. One group are those 'who are concerned with the materiality and the other division are those who employ critical social science approaches to deconstruct and understand heritage as a cultural process' (Watson & Waterton. 2011). This division and the opinions of these divided will therefore change the purpose of community heritage for others. The argument between the archaeologists and social sciences have to consider the tangible and the intangible ideas surrounding the concept of heritage. The tangible and intangible heritage consists of memories of who the community are which is as important to that of the historic buildings and other archaeological sites. The changes within governmental policies such as that of the 'Planning Policy Guidance note 16: Archaeology and planning' (DoE. 1990) started the disappearance of the involvement of the public within their local archaeological heritage. Therefore in 2012 a Localism act was passed in which it 'contained a number of proposals to give local authorities new freedom and flexibility' (Clark. 2011: 3). With the development of Britain's heritage and the development of archaeology worldwide, the Localism act was able to expand the local authority's influences and 'responsibilities which are defined by legislation' (Clark. 2011: 4). The introduction of this new act allowed the local authorities to help the communities in ways that would not have seemed possible prior to the 2012 Localism act. The variety of benefits which have been bought with the new Localism act shows that now the public's opinion will be heard, as Clark (2011) explains that in some communities the voluntary and community groups who brought ideas forward argued that they did not receive a fair hearing. From this new Localism act the local authorities can now approve of more community projects to help with the local economy which the community heritage sector highly supports.

How is it practised?

Community heritage can be practised in a variety of ways depending on the nature of the community heritage involved. Heritage provides education opportunities for the public, from 'all ages, abilities and backgrounds' (Gem. 2018), helping people understand their heritage and become a part of something bigger. Practising community heritage is believed to bring communities a sense of pride and boost the economic sector within their communities. This is evident in the way community heritage is embedded within our education and economic industries which has since become a firm part of our society. The Heritage Lottery Fund (2018b) explores community heritage through the money raised by national lottery players helping areas across the UK explore, enjoy and protect their community's heritage. One of the main methods of practising community heritage is that of education. Educating other organisations, young leaders, and provide training opportunities allows for the advancement of the understanding of our cultural heritage and what individuals can do to help sustain our history. Through the education sector, museums and heritage centres have developed to sustain the environment and the communities surrounding them, which can be seen through events managed by the heritage centres to entice the public to donate or to help out within sustaining their heritage. The Heritage Lottery Fund (2018c) also lists a number of other ways people could be involved within their community heritage; reviving a long lost tradition, reciting folk tales, celebrating people's lives who are on the war memorial, save historic buildings or discover the origins of the people who used to live there. These practises have been acceptable through the Localism act which has permitted the local authorities to improve the community's life and to support the community's economy.

The practise of community heritage brings various advantages towards the local community. Groundwork (2018a) explains that the different community projects can attract funders and wider community to the heritage projects being developed, which can increase the volunteers involved. The attention of external investment within specific community projects allows for the investment of the economy as a whole. The external investment and the increase in tourism due to the improvement of the community heritage increases economic growth, this is the main advantage to the practise of community heritage towards the community itself. The economic growth can be monitored in numerous ways such as that of 'bringing historic buildings back into economic use' (Hobson et al. 2016: 26) which would boost tourism numbers and further increasing the economic sector for the local community. Other advantages include bringing people together, the community becoming proud of their local history, the reuse of buildings and positivity to the local population. The heritage which can determine a lot about a geographical location can be the 'important part in how people view the places they live and how they feel and react to their quality of life' (Hobson et al. 2016: 5). Community involvement ensures the restoration of historic buildings, parklands and other heritage sites within the local community, this ensures a better quality of life as the public are interacting within a wider community not just their own. The argument that was presented earlier from Waterton and Watson (2011) analyses the advantage of social sciences critically evaluating the heritage available to understand the cultural process to

where we are today. This benefits the educational sector and the experimentation from a university student's perspective, allowing the information gained to be dispersed through academic literature to the wider public. Community projects can be a positive influence upon the development of communities by involving different community groups the experience as a whole can help change the perception of a specific community.

However through the practise of community heritage there are a variety of disadvantages that need to be addressed. When applying for a grant or help from bigger organisations the authorities have to take several things into consideration, as practising methods within community heritage comes with responsibilities such as; 'risks and legal issues, stakeholders, financial issues, communication issues, monitoring and evaluation, and sustainability' (Groundwork. 2018b). Volunteers are a major factor when thinking about community heritage and as the volunteers are heavily involved within every aspect of the project the risks increase within the health and safety of the site and of the public. The risk assessments are completed and the local public should understand the risks involved when applying their skills to the project. The health and safety of the volunteers also links into the legal issues which can arise when starting up a community project. Other issues such as 'rights to land access, planning constraints and meeting the requirements of public authorities' (Groundwork. 2018d) can all be factors which affect the community heritage project. The attraction to tourism and to the wider community can be a huge advantage to some towns allowing them to become noticed on the map. However this can also be a disadvantage within the community. This is shown through the population growth of communities increase due to the attraction of certain areas involving the local heritage. Population increase can result in a housing crisis which can be resolved with the development of new properties. The development of such properties then takes the land away from the community and can also take away the heritage which can sometimes be on the buildings site. Analysing the negative side to Waterton and Watsons (2011) argument was that the people divided agreed that the concern for community heritage was that of the materiality. This concern is appropriate to which the public are not trained in such practises to preserve the community's heritage and can therefore destroy the archaeology involved. Without the right knowledge and care within the field of preservation the public living within a community, especially the older generation would rather the professionals complete the job at hand. The preservation of such heritage can sometimes become adapted to the modern era and therefore does not contain the authentic material or design of what it originally was. This can lead to the perception of the community's heritage changing and becoming slightly distorted, for example for the common folk tales being told can become an event of Chinese whispers if not told correctly.

Aylsham Roman Project

To understand the concept of community heritage and the advantages and disadvantages we need to put this into an example that we can compare and analyse first hand. The Aylsham Roman project is a community based project located in Norfolk, Aylsham. The Project is organised by an archaeological company, Britannia Archaeology who are based in Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk, who organise a community excavation during August of each year. This Community orientated project allows the community to become involved in every aspect of the developmental processes that occur during this project. The Aylsham Roman projects (2018) aim is to explore and preserve the history of the roman settlement while involving the local community in every possible stage, making the site accessible to everyone of all ages and even to those who have had no previous experience in archaeology or heritage. Britannia Archaeology allows the community into every aspect of the archaeological process such as excavating, sieving for small finds and washing of the artefacts, As well as the physical processes the community are allowed to complete the necessary recording and scale drawings which will later be used within the documentation published for the archaeological community and the general public. All the archaeological processes are guided by the archaeological company, Britannia Archaeology and all reports are seen on the Aylsham Roman project website and that of Britannia Archaeology's page. The analysis of the involvement between the company and the community shows the value of heritage and to the 'extent in which people give either financially or through time' (Hobson. 2016: 8) allows for the suggestion of how much the community value their heritage.



Figure 1 (to the left) shows a group of local people helping out at the Aylsham Roman project, after Lockwood 2017

Figure 2 (above) shows one of the archaeologists from Britannia participating in a local documentary, after Lockwood 2017

The value of heritage is shown within the argument presented above by Waterton and Watson (2011) by which argues for the concern of the materiality. Within projects such as the Aylsham Roman project the volunteers are the leading excavators on site allowing for the guidance from Britannia Archaeology, however some of the volunteers are not trained within the field of archaeology and therefore caring for the artefacts is new to them. This causes problems when thinking about the preservation of such artefacts and the chances of the artefacts becoming damaged by amateurs. With the guidance from Britannia Archaeology the damage of material is decreased but it is not rare, this is why every morning the community archaeologists are briefed about how to conduct the excavation. The other disadvantage of having a community based project such as Aylsham is that the evidence which is being recovered does not necessarily end up within the Aylsham museum itself, rather it becomes housed within the museum which is based within Norwich castle. This act of housing the artefacts within Norwich museum would occur if professional archaeologists were the sole excavators, either way this problem is a serious issue amongst archaeologists and the conservation of community heritage. This issue of housing the artefacts is both an advantage and disadvantage in the sense that the wider public across Norwich and Norfolk can acknowledge the small town Aylsham as an important historical site.

Since the development of the community heritage sector the knowledge that both professionals and non-professionals have gained has increased due to the involvement of both the public and specialists. The Aylsham Roman project think about both all ages of the local community by communicating with schools and nursing homes teaching them about the heritage of Aylsham and how the artefacts portray what Aylsham used to look like within the Roman period. Community projects such as Aylsham's has allowed the public to learn new skills which they can become proud of, physical skills such as excavating, sieving, drawing and recording but also photographing the project for documentation, acting as tour guides to other members of the community and welcoming visitors through the welcome tent. These skills allows for the transferal of communication and other practises throughout different communities and professions. Through this community project other professionals have been able to apply their skills to the project and help the local community to understand their past in different ways. The Aylsham Roman project is in contact with Julie Curl who deals with animal and human bone illustrations, bringing the finger marks and paw prints to life. They are also in contact with Adrian Marsden who identifies small finds such as coins and other metal work and other individuals are involved helping the archaeologists and the community to date and identify the material found. An advantage to the local professionals for getting involved within the community excavation is that finding jobs with this content is difficult to come by and other professionals within the archaeological field are not allows the same handing experience as that which is offered within the Aylsham Roman project. Advantages to community orientated work is the funding from a variety of events which sustain the cost of risk assessments and insurance in which Britannia Archaeology would need to complete before allowing any volunteers on site. Groundwork which is mentioned above funds the Tesco bags for help campaign and helps with the funding towards the Aylsham Roman

project. The Tesco bags for help organisation helps local community projects aiding with funding from the 'sales of plastic carrier bags' (Tesco. 2018).

The funding for the project such as Aylsham comes from the local community investing within their own heritage and their own interest. Hobson (2016) explains that people are willing to pay more than the cost of the service as it links into their community. The economic sector and tourism sector for Aylsham will have increased within the time period of the community projects taking place. This attracts the wider community and more investors willing to invest in a project which is involving the community in a positive way. The continuation of the Aylsham Roman project helps with the funding of the excavation and the other costs that are necessary for such projects to occur, this retains the public profile of the project and the allows for the local community to continue the journey of their heritage.



Figure 3 showing the entire group at the end of the 2017 excavation project at Aylsham, after Purdy 2017

Conclusion

In conclusion the development of archaeology during the 20th century has allowed for the practise of community heritage to become widely respected within the UK. This development had changed the responsibilities from the archaeologists themselves to developers, however since the Localism act of 2012 the responsibility for community heritage, such as those like the Aylsham Roman project has since come back within the community's responsibility and the local archaeologists. Community heritage is a beneficial way of connecting the community with the past and allowing for the development of different communities. Community heritage permits not only the public to become involved but the variety of other small businesses who wish to be a part of something bigger, helping out their community while also gaining publicity and economic benefits from such events. The term community heritage therefore has still not been defined as community heritage can be termed with various definitions depending on the geographical location of the community projects and the type of archaeology that is involved.

The definition of community heritage and why it is so different depending on the geographical location is dependent on how the local communities practise the concept of community heritage. Therefore the practise of community heritage varies depending on the location and the type of history they are preserving. The practise of community heritage as explained previously is accomplished by excavation and finding the origin of a town, folk tales and telling stories, re-enactments, the conservation of different buildings, and the education of practitioners or children through primary schools and high schools. When practising community heritage the educational benefits are one of the important factors when thinking about the history's survival. The practise which the Aylsham Roman project has abided by connects the local history with all ages within the community, taking the history to schools, nursing homes and to other events within Aylsham to make the public aware of their surroundings and the importance of acknowledging such history.

The argument presented by Waterton and Watson (2011) is relevant throughout the entire archaeological field as well as the community heritage sector. The argument within community heritage becomes urgent when thinking about the involvement of the public and the experiences they may not have had. However the resourcefulness of such opportunities allows for the wider public as well as the local public to become involved within their own past and become connected with something they did not seem possible prior to the practise of community heritage. Community heritage is a significant concept when thinking about the conservation of the past and the connection to the community's ancestors, which allows for the understanding of personal identification and the individuality which local communities pride themselves on.

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