

Social Impact Archaeology: Pontefract Castle and the Gatehouse Project

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Abstract: Archaeology is said to add value to development, creating a deeper sense of place, community identity and improving health and wellbeing. Accentuating these wider social values has been welcomed by a profession keen to broaden its public relevance and legitimacy and protect its seat at the table in modern cultural life, but how much, if at all, do the public actually benefit from developer-led archaeology? Benefits to individuals and communities from archaeology projects are often abstract, intangible and difficult to attribute, and the discipline arguably lacks a satisfactory frame of reference around which it can express and design for these additional social values. Drawing on the language of social impact investing, this paper will explore how the UK based collaborative platform, DigVentures, has addressed this challenge. It introduces a 'Theory of Change' and 'Standards of Evidence' framework to account for the impact of development-led archaeology programmes, illustrating the causal links between activity and change through the case of the Pontefract Castle Gatehouse Project. It is complemented by a short documentary film exploring the spectrum of digital and physical opportunities for the public to participate alongside a team of highly experienced professional field archaeologists, demonstrating how development-led archaeology can be designed to accomplish far more than answer a planning brief.

Link to accompanying film: https://youtu.be/rr_bc_aTsk8

Background

Pontefract Castle has a rich and nationally important heritage; one of England's strongest fortresses throughout the medieval period and beyond, it played a crucial role in politics and the balance of power in the North of England (Figure 1). The site is mentioned in numerous historical sources, including by Oliver Cromwell, who described the castle as 'one of the strongest inland garrisons in the kingdom', and

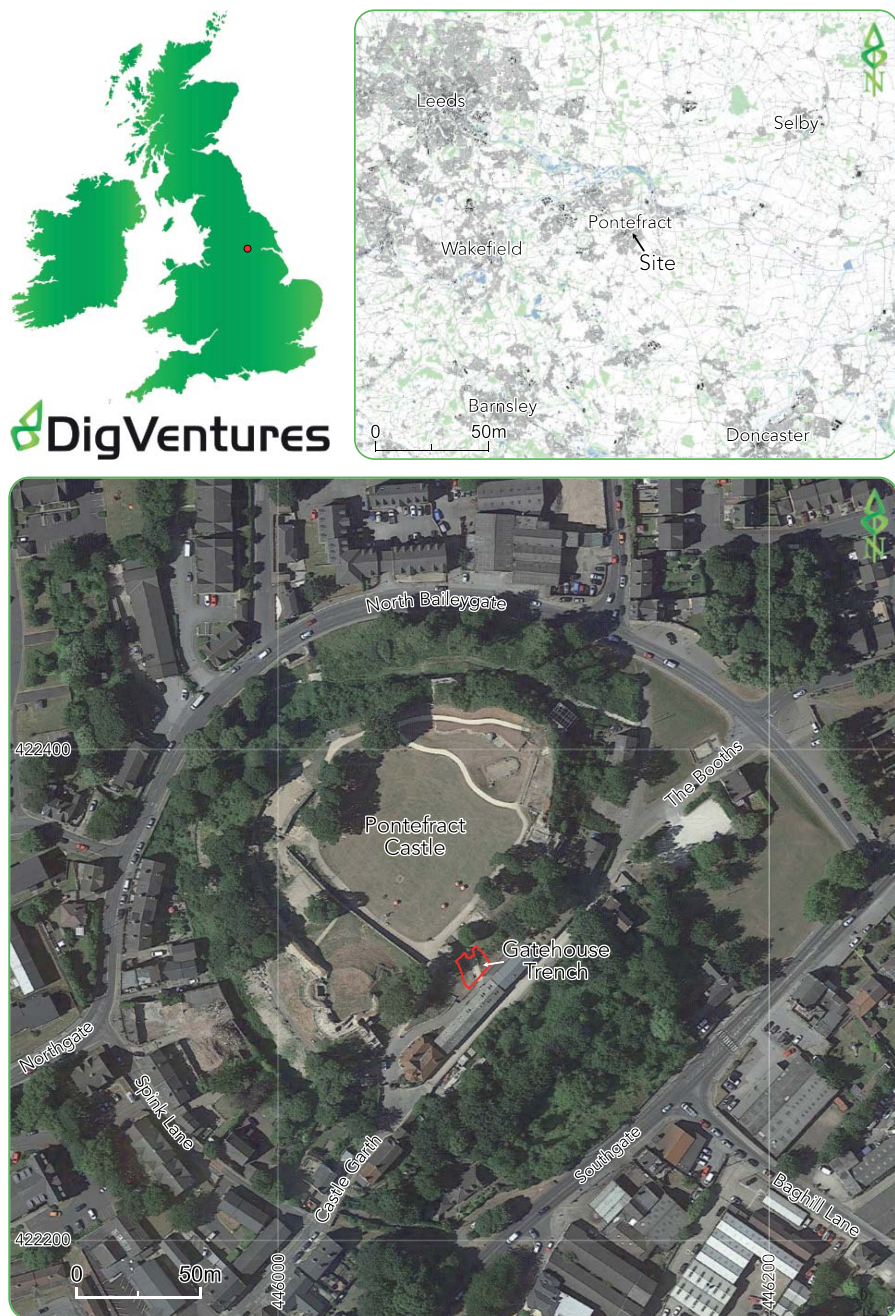


Figure 1. Site location

William Shakespeare, who wrote in his play *Richard III* of Pontefract Castle 'Pomfret, Pomfret! O thou bloody prison'. Despite this national significance, relatively little is known about the archaeological resource and the recent discovery of a previously unidentified gate house indicates that much is still to be learned about the physical structure of Pontefract Castle.

In 2019, development-led archaeological investigations were undertaken in order to enhance access and to improve visitor access as part of their 'Pontefract Castle: Key to the North' project, supported by a £3m grant from the National Lottery Heritage Fund. When previously unidentified structures associated with a gate house complex were revealed during pre-development works, an additional application for NPPF Emergency Funding was made by the site custodians, Wakefield Metropolitan District Council (WMDC). Historic England (HE) granted this application on condition that archaeological research was undertaken alongside community participation, fulfilling WMDC and HE's overarching vision to increase public awareness during the site's redevelopment, and to improve understanding of Pontefract Castle and its environs.

Pontefract Castle is situated within an area of significant deprivation, with 18% of residents falling within the top 10% of most deprived in England (data taken from the Index of Multiple Deprivation based on the 2011 census). The 'Gatehouse Project, Pontefract Castle' therefore provided a major opportunity to stimulate the heritage-led regeneration of the site and its environs, engage the local community in their heritage, provide skills training and practical experience to the public, and build an audience and local appreciation for the castle's instrumental contribution to regional and national history. WMDC and HE undertook a public procurement exercise, with tender evaluation slanted towards the best archaeological design (rather than the lowest price), in line with the requirements of the Social Value Act for public sector bodies to consider the social, economic and environmental benefits of contracts they award. DigVentures proposed a creative approach to excavation, with an intelligently designed mix of professional excavation and public participation programmed



Figure 2. Local community participants digging at Pontefract Castle

over the course of an eight-week investigation, creating a breadth and depth of participation opportunities from informal site visits to structured field training (Figure 2). This blended model comprised six weeks dedicated primarily to servicing the commercial imperative and research brief, with public events running alongside, interspersed with two weeks of public participation and training in the trenches in line with tuition based on National Occupational Standards. What follows is a brief summary of how this toolkit was applied in the context of a development-led project at Pontefract Castle; a broader discussion of the theoretical basis of this approach has also been published for reference (Wilkins 2019a and b).

Theory of Change and Standards of Evidence

Whilst many project leaders can clearly justify the purpose of their work (the 'why'), there is much less certainty concerning the tools and methodologies they should use to measure the social impact of their work (the 'what' and 'how'). The DigVentures (DV) framework for measuring social impact has been informed by the work of two funding organisations in particular, combining the deep sector knowledge of the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to provide guidelines on heritage programme outcomes ('what' to measure), and the standards of evidence devised by Nesta, the UK Innovation Foundation ('how' to measure). The result is a customisable evaluation framework comprising a toolkit of three interrelated tables enabling archaeologists to design participatory field research projects whilst simultaneously measuring the efficacy of their work (Figure 3).

In response to a commission by the NLHF to assess the efficacy of their approach to evaluation, Hewison and Holden (2004) refined the notion of Public Value to encompass three interlocking kinds of Cultural Value: intrinsic, instrumental and institutional. These three concepts were then refined into an operational outcome framework designed to encompass the range of intrinsic (outcomes for heritage); instrumental (outcomes for people); and institutional values (outcomes for communities and society) that characterise NLHF grant-aided projects (Clark & Maeer 2008). Exactly how a specific set of activities result in the achievement of desired goals can be pictured as a 'Theory of Change' (Figure 4), an approach that requires organisations to clearly articulate their social mission: why they exist, what change they are making, and who they are making it for.

The DV Theory of Change is divided into three rows, each dedicated to a separate outcome theme following the NHLF Cultural Value model, from the intrinsic outcomes for heritage more readily associated with research excavation to the instrumental outcomes for people and communities. This model describes the joined-up thinking between the activities our organisation undertakes (Figure 4, column 1 and 2 from left) and how this is hypothesised to realise the broader mission (Figure 4, column 4 and 5). Outputs are a measurable unit of product or service, such as a community excavation (Figure 4, column 3); outcomes are an observable change for individuals or communities, such as acquiring skills or knowledge (Figure 4, column 4). Social impact, 'conceived as the difference that ventures make to people's lives over and above what would have happened in the absence of that venture' (Nesta 2017, 7), is the effect on



Figure 3. The DigVentures evaluation framework, a toolkit consisting of a theory of change, standards of evidence and project specific evaluation matrix

outcomes attributable to the output, measured against two metrics: scale, or breadth of people reached; and depth, or the importance of this impact on their lives.

If the first hurdle is defining the 'what' to evaluate, the next challenge is to implement a robust methodology managing the practicalities of 'how' to measure. The credibility of a Theory of Change rests on the level of certainty that organisational activities are the cause of this change. In order for this certainty to be achieved, the correct data must be collected to isolate the impact to the intervention, and attention to detail paid to this process on an even par with excavation strategy. By progressing through

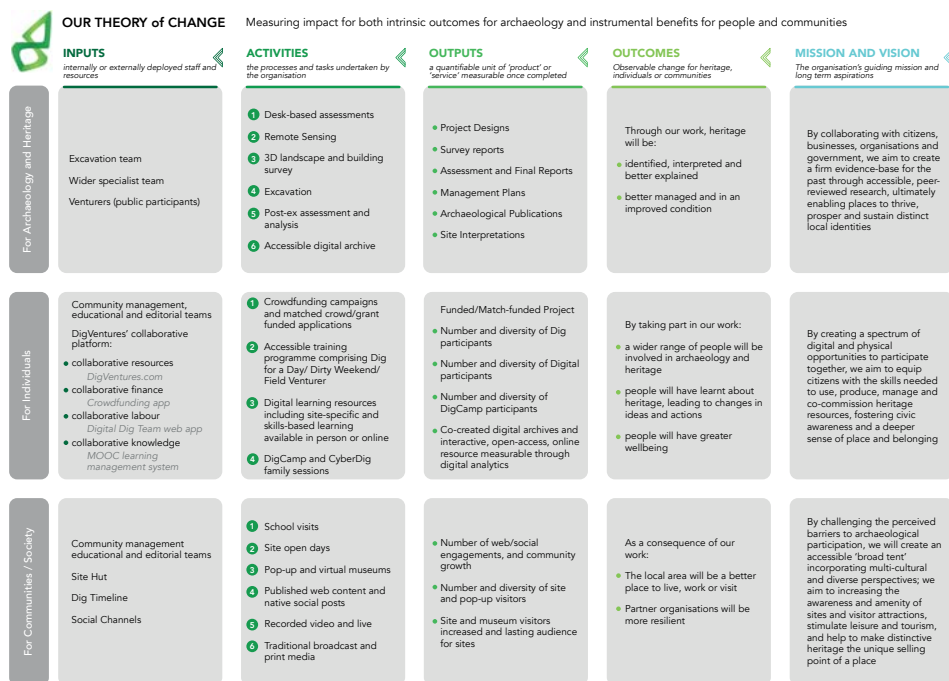


Figure 4. DigVentures 'Theory of Change'

five steps of ascending surety, Nesta's 'standards of evidence' framework has been designed to provide a structure around measuring impact, ensuring that evaluation strategies are appropriate to the stage of development of a variety of different products, services and programmes (Putrick & Ludlow 2012).

Following this model, the DV standards of evidence framework details the required evidence burden (Figure 5, column 1 from left); the suggested method for collecting evidence (Figure 5, column 2); and how this specifically relates to the outcomes for heritage, people and communities (Figure 5, column 3, 4 and 5) as detailed in the DV Theory of Change. Evidential standards begin with Level 1 (Figure 5, row 1), where practitioners are able to give an account of hypothesised impact, providing a logical reason why project activities could have an impact on outcomes, and how that would be an improvement on alternative provision. For a project to achieve Level 2 (Figure 5, row 2) practitioners will be gathering data that shows some change amongst participants, but this may not be sufficient to provide evidence of direct causality. At Level 3 (Figure 5, row 3) practitioners will be able to demonstrate that they are causing the hypothesised impact, by showing less impact amongst those who don't participate in the project or receive the product/service. Progressing to Level 4 (Figure 5, row 4), and practitioners can explain why and how the project is having the impact observed, with results potentially independently verified. Finally, at Level 5 (Figure 5, row 5),

STANDARDS OF EVIDENCE				
EXPECTATION	SUGGESTED METHOD	OUTCOMES FOR HERITAGE	OUTCOMES FOR PEOPLE	OUTCOMES FOR COMMUNITIES
Providing an academically rigorous framework, whilst ensuring that impact measurement is appropriate to the stage of development of a variety of different products, services and programmes.	Steps needed to ensure correct evidence is collected to determine whether or not a venture is making a positive difference	Intrinsic benefits relating to the research dividend and evidence baseline required for successful management of archaeological sites and landscapes	Instrumental benefits for participants and platform users, enabling the voluntary sector to scale in a sustainable and ethically responsible fashion	Wider social impacts received by those who may not be direct participants, but benefit through increased amenity value, tourism and local distinctiveness.
Level One A low threshold, appropriate to very early stage innovations, which may still be at the idea stage. Involving little more than a clear articulation of why the intervention is needed, what it will aim to achieve why this is better than what currently happens. Project owners will be able to give an account of impact, providing a logical reason why their intervention could have an impact and why that would be an improvement on the current situation.	A clear rationale to show why the product/service could have an impact, and why that would be an improvement on the current situation. Articulated as a theory of change and logic model, linking activities, outputs, outcomes to hypothesised impact.	A fully illustrated Project Design, signed off by statutory stakeholder, outlining key archaeological research questions, roles, procedures, stages and outputs.	A training or activity plan, linking activities to outputs, outcomes and impact, and an explanation of how the outcome could be measured.	A training, activity, audience development and/or heritage resource management plan, linking activities to outputs, outcomes and impact, and an explanation of how the outcome could be measured.
Level Two At Level 2 projects will be gathering data that shows some change amongst those receiving or using the intervention. At this stage, data can begin to show that there is a change in the measure of the outcome among the recipients of the product or service, but this may not be sufficient to provide evidence of direct causality.	Pre and post-survey evaluation; cohort/panel study; and regular internal surveying.	Assessment Report; Management Report, base-lined against previous investigations	Evaluation survey for participants to quantify demographics, socio-economic characteristics and spatial data, followed up with a pre and post-survey qualitative evaluation using a separate questionnaire methodology to determine any changes as a consequence of taking part	Evaluation survey for site visitors to quantify audience demographics, socio-economic characteristics and spatial data, followed up with a qualitative study using a separate questionnaire methodology to determine any changes that took place as a consequence of the visit
Level Three At Level 3 projects will be able to demonstrate that they are causing the hypothesised impact, by showing less impact amongst those who don't receive the product/service.	Robust methods using a control group, or evaluating a random selection of participants, begin to isolate the impact of the product/service. All products/services at Level 3 will be well documented, with necessary skills, training (and other delivery requirements) outlined clearly, to enable effective replication in alternative places, situation, contexts etc.	Analytical report, synthesizing specialist reports with previous work locally, regionally and nationally, to determine significance, importance and potential of the site	Meta-analysis of evaluation results with those derived from projects delivering similar community-based activities, including archaeological/heritage and other unrelated arts/citizen science projects.	Meta-analysis of evaluation results with those derived from projects delivering similar community-based activities - including both archaeological/heritage and other unrelated arts/citizen science projects.
Level Four At Level 4 projects can explain why and how the intervention is having the impact observed and evidenced so far, supported by an independent evaluation to validate the findings. This will also assess the extent to which the intervention can deliver impact at a reasonable cost, and whether it can be replicated and purchased in multiple locations.	Robust independent evaluation that investigates and validates the nature of the impact; this might include endorsement via commercial standards or industry kitemarks, underpinned by a documented standardisation of delivery and processes, data on costs of production and acceptable price point for customers.	Quality assured by the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA) under the Registered Organisation scheme, and involving independent site inspections and documentary audit.	External audit of quality of training programmes and activities by CIfA, The Archaeological Training Forum, Register of Professional Archaeologists, Skills Passport and National Occupational Standards.	External audit of community programming and impact by specialist consultancy, undertaken independently of project team.
Level Five At Level 5, projects will be able to demonstrate that the intervention could be operated up by someone else, somewhere else and scaled up, whilst continuing to have positive and direct impact on the outcome, whilst remaining a financially viable proposition. For a service, this will establish whether it can be delivered by different staff in different locations.	Evidence will be derived from multiple evaluations of the product/service in different settings (at least two evaluations, one of which will be independent) to demonstrate that the product/service can be used in different settings geographically and/or with different types of product/service users). Appropriate methods at this level will include multiple replication evaluations; future scenario analysis; or fidelity evaluation.	An excavation manual, underpinned by a broader operations manual and 'culture deck', detailing how the DigVentures project model should be applied in differing contexts.	A syllabus and training manual, underpinned by a broader operations manual and outline spectrum of engagement, detailing the participant's journey from digital supporter to experienced field digger.	An audience engagement and communications plan, underpinned by a broader operations manual and tailored 'culture deck', detailing how the intervention should be applied with clear and measurable benchmarks.

Figure 5. DigVentures 'Standards of Evidence'

the project methodology is robust and well-evidenced enough to be scaled up and operated by other teams or organisations, whilst continuing to have positive and direct impact on the outcome and remaining a financially viable proposition.

	ACTIVITIES the processes and tasks undertaken by the organisation	OUTPUTS a quantifiable unit of 'product' or 'service' measurable once completed	OUTCOMES Observable change for heritage, individuals or communities	STANDARDS OF EVIDENCE Data collection and confidence rating demonstrating the positive difference made by an intervention
For Archaeology and Heritage	Stakeholder consultation with national and local heritage bodies, societies and local authorities Archaeological investigation of nationally significant site Accessible archaeological archive	Scheduled Monument Consent Archaeological Project Design Archaeological Assessment Report with recommendations Archaeological Archive	Through our work, heritage will be: identified, interpreted and better explained better managed and in an improved condition	Level 3 – Analytical report, synthesising specialist reports with previous regional, national and international work to determine significance, importance and potential of the site.
For Individuals	Half-day family friendly DigCamp sessions CIFA endorsed half-day Finds Lab workshops CIFA endorsed half-day excavation skills training Heritage skills workshops	Excavation and finds room skills training for 81 YAC members 163 DigCamp participants (children under 12 and their parents) Excavation and finds room skills training for 132 participants 20 Participants in photogrammetry and creative skills workshops	By taking part in our work: a wider range of people will be involved in archaeology and heritage people will have greater wellbeing people will have learnt about the archaeology and heritage of Pontefract Castle, leading to changes in ideas and actions people will have more skills in excavation and finds processing, giving greater confidence to get involved	Level 3 – Field school training programme quality assured and endorsed by CIFA. Level 2 – Project evaluation report including survey data for Finds Lab, DigCamp and project participants to determine changes for individuals as a consequence of taking part, and highlighting scalability, implementation and ability to meet local needs.
For Communities / Society	Education programme for primary schools Daily site tours during archaeological investigation Published web content and native social posts Traditional broadcast and print media	372 school pupils from six local schools benefit from tailored education content Daily site tours reach new and more diverse audiences (438 people) Visitor numbers of Pontefract Castle increase by 138% to 14,810 500,000 combined impression across Facebook & Twitter 7,000 unique microsite views Coverage by BBC Look North, BBC Radio Leeds, Wakefield Express, Pontefract and Castleford Express	As a consequence of our work: more and a wider range of people will be involved in heritage people have learned about archaeology and heritage, leading to change in ideas and actions the local area will be a better place to live, work or visit	Level 2 – Collection of evaluation survey data for participating schools, visitors to the archaeological site, temporary exhibitions, aiming to quantify audience demographics and determine any changes which took place as a consequence of the visit

Figure 6. Project specific Evaluation Matrix

These two tools are the basis of the DigVentures social business model, providing rapid feedback to understand social impact in real time, enabling the organisation to pivot activities if target communities are not being reached, or quickly scale activities that successfully engage target groups. This framework is utilised in the design of all projects, where social impact is devised through a third tool – a project specific evaluation matrix (Figure 6) drawing on the relevant sections of the Theory of Change that align with specific project activities (Figure 6, column 1 from left). The hypothetical linkages between measurable outputs (Figure 6, column 2) and potential outcomes for heritage, people and communities can then be determined (Figure 6, column c). The level of certainty that these outcomes were a direct consequence of either the particular archaeological methodology or the community activities, rather than something that would have happened anyway, can be assessed against the standards of evidence matrix (Figure 6, column d).

The following sections describe how the complex, deeply stratified excavation at Pontefract Castle was designed to enable public participation opportunities, and how a carefully considered impact evaluation strategy ensured that both the 'community' and 'archaeology' outcomes were delivered with equal importance.

Outcomes for archaeology and heritage

Fieldwork was undertaken initially between 30th September and 3rd November 2019 to investigate parts of the gatehouse structure exposed during an earlier archaeological watching brief at Pontefract Castle, located at the base of the Victorian steps leading from the visitor centre into the castle's inner bailey (Caswell et al. 2020). The community excavation was conducted in two stages: the first three weeks comprised hand and machine excavation by a team of professional archaeologists, followed by a two-week programme of excavation, recording and finds processing involving members of the local community (Figure 7). Based on the results of the work in 2019, a second phase of excavation was undertaken in 2020 targeted to reveal the full stratigraphic sequence within the previously identified drawbridge pit. This phase of work comprised hand excavation of sealed deposits exclusively within the drawbridge pit and was completed by a team of three professional archaeologists (Figures 8 and 9).

Beginning with outcomes for archaeology and heritage, activities contributing to the archaeological research were designed in a conventional fashion, following Historic England's MORPHE project model (Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment) as a condition of permission to excavate under Scheduled Monument Consent. Four aims and 16 objectives were defined in the Project Design (Casswell et al. 2019) devised in accordance with priorities articulated in the Historic England Research Agenda (2017) and Historic England Corporate Plan (2018-21). These aims were achieved through a number of traditional field and archaeological science activities, including aerial and ground-based photogrammetry; auger survey; archaeological investigation; palaeoenvironmental assessment (pollen and plant macrofossils); faunal assessment; and finds assessment (pottery, metalwork and struck flint).

During fieldwork, weekly meetings were held between the DV team, Neil Redfern (HE Inspector), Ian Sanderson (West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service) and representatives from WMDC to ensure the direction of the project was in accordance with the research aims and objectives. Resulting outputs (Project Designs and Reports)



Figure 7. Community participants supervised in the drawbridge pit by professional archaeologists

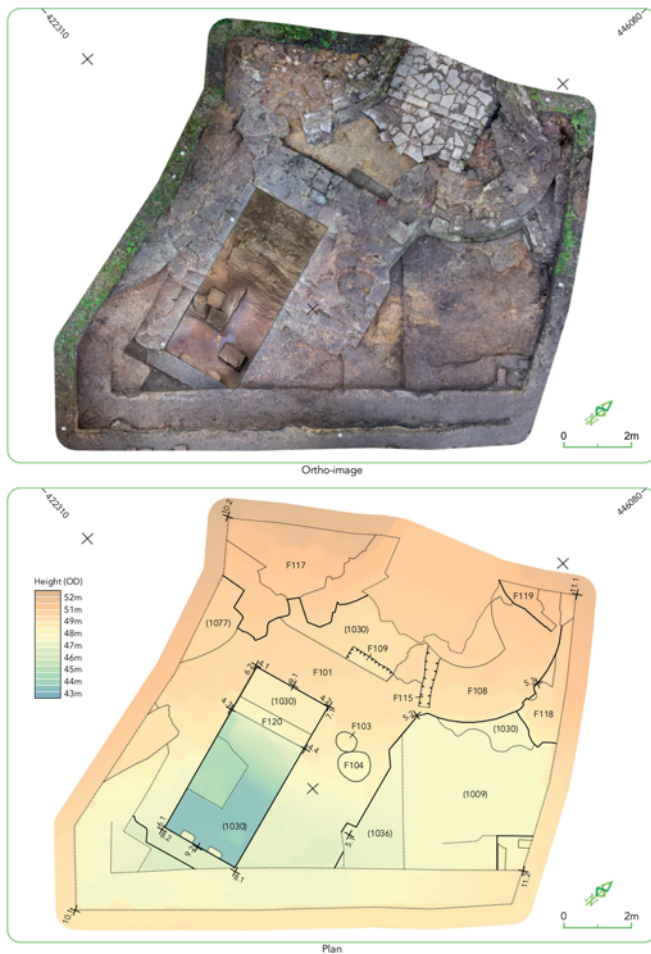
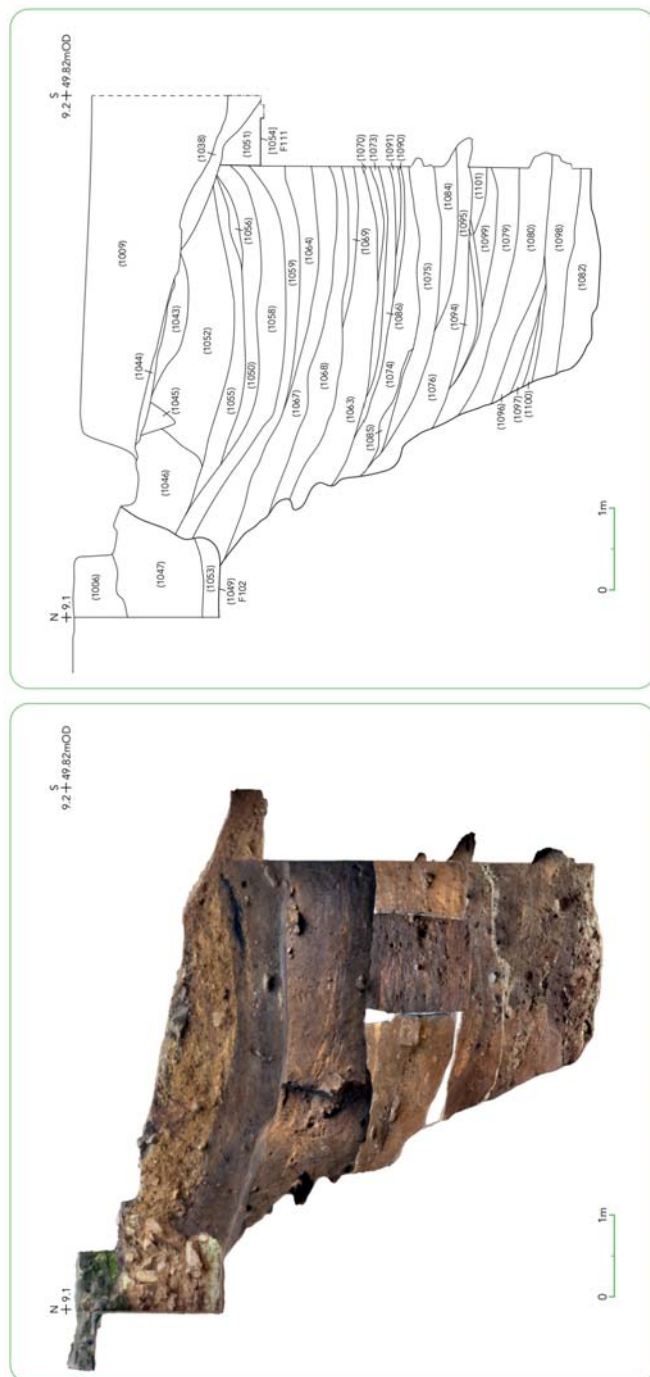


Figure 8. Post-excavation ortho-image and plan of the Pontefract Castle drawbridge pit indicating depth below ordnance datum

determining the significance, importance and potential of the archaeology were also signed off by this stakeholder team, a governance structure that ensured that claims made regarding heritage outcomes (better identified, interpreted and managed) could be firmly evidenced (level 3). In addition to all DV's work falling under the quality assurance of the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA), these additional checks and balances ensure that civic participation can be scaled to meet demand whilst still maintaining the commitment to quality archaeological research.

These intrinsic outcomes for heritage are familiar ground for archaeologists, where collegiate peer review forms the basis of quality assurance strategies. A social impact



model will design volunteering activities with an eye to both intrinsic and instrumental outcomes, ensuring that the time volunteers spend digging increases the quality of the historic environment whilst also benefiting individual participants. As these outcomes are often abstract, intangible and difficult to attribute, data collection strategies to evidence impact should be designed and incorporated into fieldwork from the outset (see Figure 6 and below).

Outcomes for people

For the Pontefract Gatehouse project, two slightly different data collection strategies were undertaken to encompass both project participants and site visitors; participants were interviewed pre- and post-dig experience (99% completion rate, 347 in total), and visitors completed a questionnaire following their experience (24% completion rate, 104 in total). The age, gender and professional background of participants was derived through digital analytics, with categories mapped from the Office for National Statistics, followed by more in-depth analysis designed to reveal 'whether or not people will have learnt about heritage, developed skills, changed their attitudes and/or behaviour, and had an enjoyable experience'.

Outcomes for people were achieved with a combination of activities designed to ensure that 'a wider range of people will be involved in archaeology and heritage'. To help flatten perceived barriers to participation, accessible half day sessions were offered including Finds Lab Workshops, Dig Experiences and DigCamps (Figure 10 and 11), all of which followed DigVentures' ClfA-endorsed Field School curriculum, including:

- Guided tours (5th October until 3rd November) – 438 participants
- Educational sessions for school classes (8th until 17th October) – 372 children from six schools
- Excavation and finds room training for YACs (12th and 13th October) – 81 YAC members
- DigCamp in the trench and the finds room for children and parents (19th, 20th and 26th October until 3rd November) – 163 participants
- Excavation and finds room training for adults (21st October until 3rd November) – 132 participants
- Two photogrammetry workshops (26th November and 2nd November) – 10 participants
- Two creative workshops (3rd November) – 10 participants

Gender profiles for participants were broadly balanced, with 54% female and 46% male, with the youngest aged 4 and the oldest 76 (Figure 12). All age groups and socio-economic backgrounds were well represented in the data, with a marked improvement on existing community archaeology provision compared with the typically retired, over 65 local civic society groups (Wilkins 2020, 33). In addition to widening the demographic and socioeconomic range of participation (when compared to existing community archaeology provision), the project attracted an overwhelmingly new audience for archaeology, with 80% of participants having never taken part in archaeology activities before. Pre-experience interviews were completed with all project participants to help



Figure 10. Finds room activities for children and families

understand why each had decided to get involved in something entirely new to them, and provide a baseline understanding against which the impact of the experience could be determined through post-experience interviews. Participants answered in their own words, and the response were coded into ten categories (see Wilkins and Ungemach 2020 for a comprehensive analysis of this motivational and experience data, assigned to level 2 in the evidential standards framework). Bench marked against our evaluative framework, evidence that we were responsible for the changes observed for participants was assigned to both level two and three, as some well-established elements of the programme (such as ClfA endorsed training) ran alongside innovative experimental activities (such as creative art activities designed to attract new audiences).

Outcomes for communities and society

Alongside structured activities for project participants, other lighter touch opportunities were provided for site visitors to ensure that the project delivered outcomes for communities and society. Interpretation boards were placed alongside the trench-side fence,



Figure 11. Parent and child DigCamp excavation of the Victorian deposits

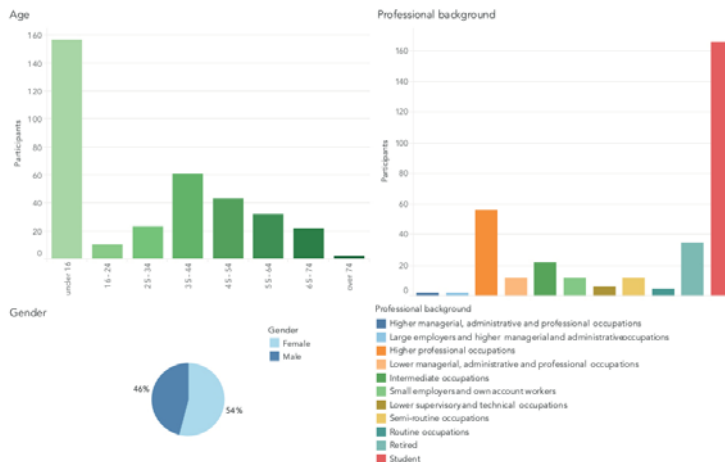


Figure 12. Age, gender and socio-economic background of project participants

and observers were encouraged to talk to and interact with the team and drop into the adjacent Finds Room to see what had been discovered. These more informal audience activities were supplemented with structured, hour-long tours of the trench and finds room, detailing the history of the site, explaining the research process, and highlighting the day's latest finds. Visitors were encouraged to complete a short evaluation form after their experience (24% of those visitors who took part), to understand the impact the project made on the wider community.

In response to this additional archaeological programming, a substantial 138% year-on-year increase in visits to the castle were recorded during October 2019 (14,810, up from 6,800). Given that 67% of visitor survey respondents stated that the dig was their main reason for visiting Pontefract Castle, it is not unreasonable to assign a large part of this uplift to the archaeological programming, supporting the wider project outcome that a 'wider range of people will be involved in heritage.' This audience was predominantly local, with 62% of visitors living within 10 miles of the site, 19% within 50 miles, and the remainder (including a small group of Australians) travelling from further afield (Figure 13).

Many of these visitors were surprised to have stumbled upon "an actual dig in progress" in the first place, and by "the sheer scale of it all", "the depth of the drawbridge pit" and how "much more [there is] to discover". Many also put forward what they learnt on the tour, such as "that Cromwell hadn't destroyed the castle", "how far back the town existed" or "the amount of knowledge you can find from the dig" in general. Of those surveyed, 80% of respondents had never taken part in a site tour or visited an archaeological site before. These visitors described an improved perception and impression of archaeology (34%) or strengthened in their pre-existing interest for the discipline (66%). A further 77% of respondents found archaeology to be more exciting

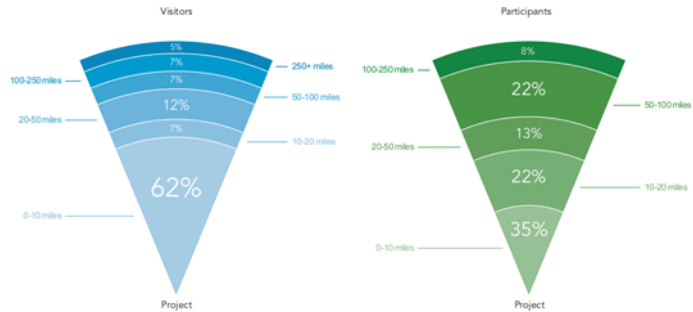


Figure 13. Average travel distance to site for visitors and participants

as a consequence of their visit, and when asked whether they would like to get more involved with archaeology in their local area, 80% agreed, of which 34% showed a very strong interest in future involvement (Figure 14).

As well as changing opinions of archaeology more generally, visitors also described an improved perception of the immediate Pontefract locality, supporting the social outcome that “the local area will be a better place to live, work or visit”. In total, 83% of respondents who claimed that their impression of the local area had changed, with one respondent clearly stating: “Pontefract has more to offer than I thought”. Another noted that they “hadn’t been too impressed of [sic] Pontefract up till now”, but now

Figure 14. Age, gender and experience impact for site visitors



found it all very interesting. People from further away admitted that they were “not aware of the area” before their visit. Locally, the positive impact of the project went even further and provided visitors with a better understanding of their local archaeology, with people saying that they gained “increased awareness of local history” as well as its former importance. Furthermore, Pontefract and its surrounding area has become a better place to live for visitors who now “feel privileged to live here!”

The project’s digital content also achieved significant breakthrough during the same period, achieving 500,000 combined impressions across Facebook and Twitter, and 12,000 post engagements (likes, shares or comments). A 3D virtual tour of the dig attracted 2,500 views on Sketchfab, driving 7,000 unique page views of the more in-depth archaeological content published on the project microsite: <https://digventures.com/pontefract-castle/> including background information, dig updates, and archival site records. Traditional TV and print media also covered the project with news stories published by BBC Look North and BBC Radio Leeds and featured in articles by the Wakefield Express and the Pontefract and Castleford Express.

Conclusion – Social impact archaeology

This short article has presented a Theory of Change and evaluation framework for measuring the social impact of public participation with archaeology programmes, ensuring that both ‘community’ and ‘archaeological research’ outcomes are designed with equal consideration. It should be read in concert with the companion piece to this work: a short documentary filmed and directed by DV Community Archaeologist Maggie Eno (see link in the abstract). Further analysis of the Pontefract Castle evaluation data can be found in the site assessment report (Wilkins & Ungemach 2020), and this will be expanded upon in the forthcoming journal publication, alongside consideration of whether the Gatehouse Project was a uniquely special case, and the potential challenges implementing this strategy on other development-led archaeology projects.

DigVentures was founded with a robust evaluation framework designed into our work as an essential step to scaling a model that now accounts for over 1,000 dig participants a year. The organising principle of this framework is that claims made regarding social impact of public participation in archaeology are as substantively evidenced as conclusions about the past drawn from the excavation itself. Increased evaluation requirements have recently been called out as just another form of audit trail for funders, or PR gloss for partners; but we see it as an opportunity for an organisation to learn, adapt, and improve their contribution to public benefit: a real-time process of equal importance to financial reporting for the health of an organisation. Just as a hole in the books would be dealt with as a matter of fiduciary responsibility, a similar rupture between the delivery of public benefit and the realities of archaeological working practice should require swift and decisive action. For other practitioners perturbed by an arguably growing deficit in archaeology’s ‘public benefit books’ we hope that the DV evaluation tool kit and Pontefract Castle case study will be of some guidance.

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