

# DETECTORISTS AND STATISTICS, OR WHY THERE'S MORE MATHS IN ARCHAEOLOGY THAN YOU'D THINK

July 29, 2011   Felicity Winkley   Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011   Anthropology, archaeologist, Archaeology, Evaluation methods, Fliss Winkley, Institute of Archaeology, metal detectorist, metal detectorists, Myers-Briggs Type Indicator, nice hot beverage, online version, pains of battering my fluffy theoretical brain, Polling, Portable Antiquities Scheme, Questionnaire, Research methods, supervisor, Twitter, United Kingdom, web-hosted version

Tea drinking seems to be a common theme amongst the Day of Archaeology entries, and why not? A nice hot beverage does seem a fairly fool-proof way to stimulate the grey cells, and is an almost mandatory accessory for a research student like myself.

My name is Fliss Winkley, and having completed a Masters in Artefact Studies at the Institute of Archaeology, UCL and done a brief stint training with the Portable Antiquities Scheme (PAS), I am now studying again. I'm in the first year of a PhD investigating metal detectorists' relationships with landscape, inspired by the experiences of seasoned detectorists and searchers who I met whilst working with the PAS. I hope to issue a questionnaire to at least 1,000 detectorists (representing 10% of the conservative estimate of the number operating in England currently) to find out just how many of them detect regularly on the same landscape and how they feel about it, particularly in terms of reconstructing a historic landscape and generating a sense of place.

First step today is to check the emails: I find not only that library books need renewing, but also that I have had several responses on Twitter, the former referencing a traditional method of research that I am very comfortable with, the latter a new technique of outreach that I am only just beginning to understand! This reminds me that I need to upload more information to the Twitter page as well, to give people a better idea of what I am up to.

Next step (thanks to a reminder e-mail from my supervisor) is to design a cover sheet for my questionnaire, so that paper versions can be circulated far and wide, alongside the web-hosted version with which I am hoping to snare those respondents I can't get to! I already have a cover sheet on the online version, but managed with great oversight to forget this might be useful in the paper copy! The relationship between metal detectorist and archaeologist has often been a prickly one in the past, with old prejudices remaining steadfast in some corners even today. As such, I have to be diplomatic when approaching potential respondents and take care to emphasise on the cover sheet that they will not be asked to reveal the exact locations of their findspots (the point at which an artefact is found).

After attaching the completed cover sheet to the questionnaire, I am ready to distribute the word doc and the link far and wide and cross my fingers that the responses start coming in. I am determined to achieve my target of 1,000 responses so that my data is statistically sound: I didn't go through the pains of battering my fluffy theoretical brain with basic statistics to get a bad set of data and spoil it all! So if you, or anyone you know is a metal detectorist, please take a look at [my questionnaire](#), and help an archaeologist today!