

‘The Value of Community-Generated Research’: the response of local and county history societies?

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‘Historic England (officially the Historic Buildings and Monuments Commission for England) is an executive non-departmental public body of the British Government sponsored by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS). It is tasked with protecting the historical environment of England by preserving and listing historic buildings, ancient monuments and advising central and local government. Budget £88.5m (Wikipedia)’

Definition of Research Frameworks from HE

‘Research Frameworks draw together information on the historic environment from a wide range of sources to provide an up-to-date overview of regional and/or subject-specific understanding. **The resulting research agendas highlight gaps in our knowledge, and suggest avenues of research to answer these’**



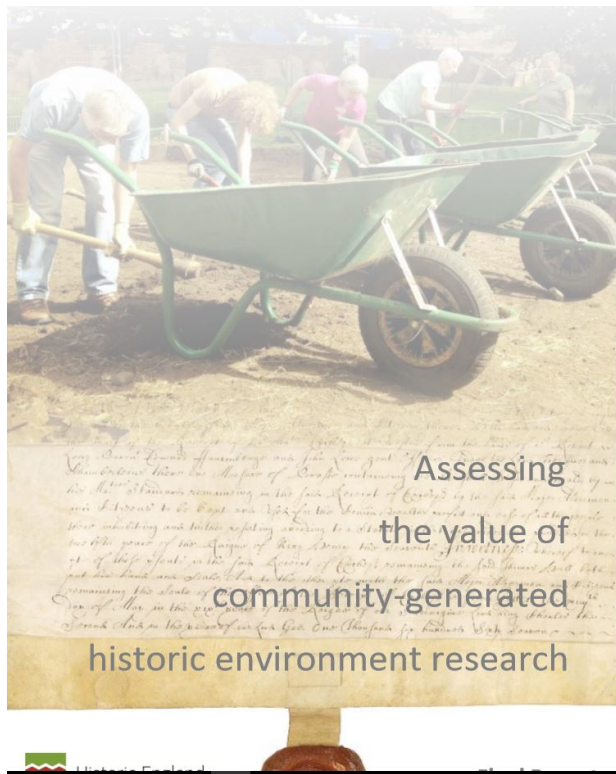
How HE views local history from the Project Design

Historic Environment Records [HERs] are the primary source of historic environment data that is used to inform planning decisions.

However, local societies and community groups have not been [so] well engaged with this process, nor has their research been as valued as that produced academically and through the planning system. **This project, aims to evaluate the value that community group generated research (archaeology, historic building and local history studies) has and could potentially have and provide a platform for developing further collaboration across the sector.**

'Assessing the Value of Community-Generated Research'

Historic England's final report Project No: 7178 (2016)



The Report is available – just put the words
historic England Value of Community-
Generated Research in your search engine

- <https://content.historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/assessing-value-of-community-generated-historic-environment-research/community-generated-historic-environment-research-7178-final-report.pdf/>
- Or use my academia page
<https://kent.academia.edu/GillianDraper>

‘Assessing the value of the value of community-generated research’

An attempt at quantitative measurement of the value of community-generated research from Historic England and Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service [WAAS]

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
24			Not at all ----- Exceptionally							
25			1	2	3	4	5	Comments		
26	VALUE	Aesthetic								
27		Communal								
28		Evidential								
29		Historical								
30										
31	SCORE [n/n]			Value Comments:						
32										
33	4. TOTAL									
34			SCORE	WEIGHT	ADJUST					
35	SECTION	1		25%						
36		2		25%						
37		3		50%						
38	OVERALL WEIGHTED SCORE [%]									
39										
40	5. ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL							Y/N		
41	5.1	Based on the above, does the research have					Research Framework(s)?			
42		potential to enhance:					HER Record(s)?			
43										
44	ASSESSMENT COMMENTS:									
45										
46										
47										
48										
49										

- 1 QUALITY (on scale: yes, no, partly) (weighted value 25%)
- Does the research cite relevant and reputable sources?
- Have the researchers made use of **background material (e.g. original archives)**?
- [For field projects] Does the research achieve a good standard of field recording?
- Is raw data/project archive accessible, and is it likely to remain so long-term?
- Is the research coherent and easy to use/navigate, i.e. is it useful as a **source**?
- 2 RESEARCH RESOURCES (y/n) (weighted value 25%)
- Does the research refer to either: Research Frameworks/HERs? [Historic Environment Record]
- Is the research referred to in either: Research Frameworks/HERs?
- **Does the research enhance the value of a site, landscape or place?**
- 3 VALUE AND POTENTIAL (weighted value 50%)
- Does the research enhance the value of a site, landscape or place? (In relation to the following aspects, on scale 1-5)
- Aesthetic; Communal; Evidential; **Historical**
- 4 Overall weighted value/score
- 5 ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL
- Based on the above [score and comments], **does the research have potential to enhance Research Frameworks/HERs?:**

- Have the researchers made use of **background material (e.g. original archives)**?
- Is the research coherent and easy to use/navigate, i.e. is it useful as a **source**?
- **Does the research enhance the value of a site, landscape or place?**
- 3 VALUE AND POTENTIAL (weighted value 50%)
- Does the research enhance the value of a site, landscape or place?
(In relation to the following aspects, on scale 1-5)
- Aesthetic; Communal; Evidential; **Historical**
- 5 ASSESSMENT OF POTENTIAL
- Based on the above [score and comments], **does the research have potential to enhance Research Frameworks/HERs?**

What did the investigation consist of?

- A county-by-county and city-by-city review of where local history societies and county societies in England are located
- A survey of member societies of BALH (and the CBA and others)
- A literature review to find out where, and what, did local historians publish—either as individuals or group

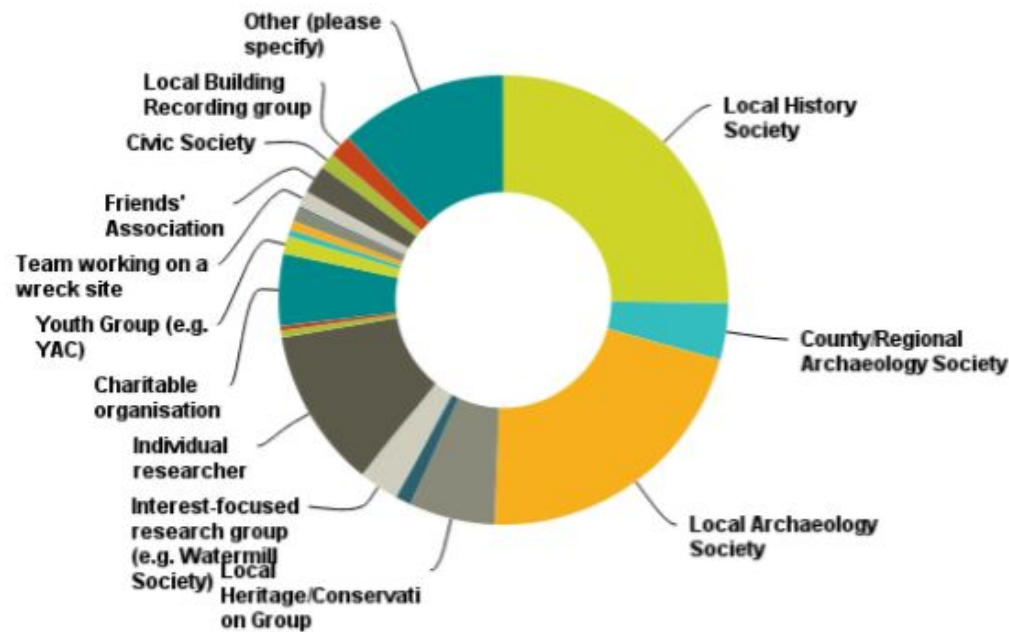
**How and where people write—
not like this perhaps!**



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Proportions of types of groups responding to survey



Visualised: recurring key words from question ‘Has your group undertaken any original historical, historical building or archaeological research in the last 5 years?’



Figure 5 Recurring keywords from Q3 Free-text: Has your group undertaken any original historical, historic building or archaeological research in the last 5 years? This can include research carried out by individual members, if published and/or disseminated by the group. Generated using Voyant Tools (Cirrus)

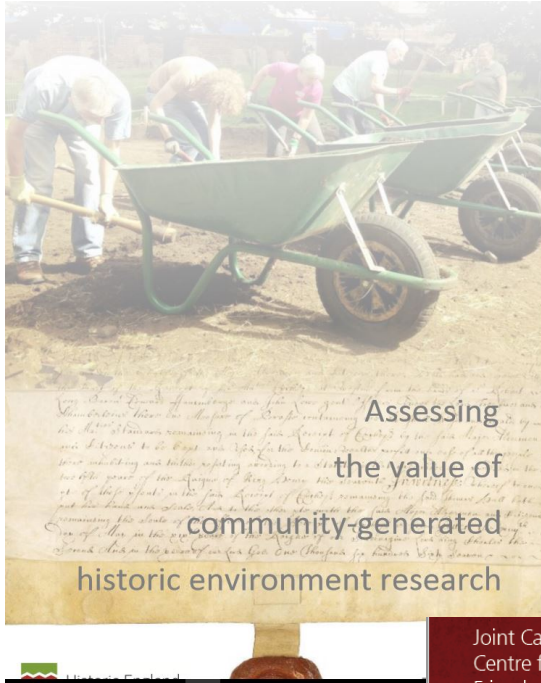
My criteria for judging whether a piece of writing was 'community-generated'

- Was the author an individual, a group or an editor?
- Was the author an academic?
- Was the contribution produced by a local history group known to BALH? Was the research reported funded by the HLF or charitable groups to produce a local output?
- Who was the publisher- academic publisher or or one specialising in local history or a local history group?
- Was it very reasonably priced so as to indicate expected sales within a local community?
- Did the title or publisher indicate community project, e.g. a publisher such as 'Friends of St James Church and the Parochial Church Council'?
- As regards articles in *The Local Historian*, what do the article itself and the Note on the Contributors say about the origins of the piece of work and the career of the author/s?

Analysis of community-generated and other research in the following local history and allied publications

	Community-generated	Possibly community-generated	By (retired) academics and allied	By individuals
Rolling list of WWI publications on BALH website	13	14	9	12
Publications reviewed online by BALH 2012-15	12	12	7	28
Projects and publications appearing in <i>Local History News</i> 2012-2015	64	3	3	12
Production of books etc reviewed in <i>The Local Historian</i>	16	18	10	26
Articles in <i>The Local Historian</i>	1	1	8	9
TOTALS	106	48	27	87

Finding the results: HE's final report Project No: 7178 (2016)- Conclusion 2 (part of):



- 'Only half [the survey respondents] (52.0%) are circulating their research to the local HER, which comprises the key research resource for the Historic Environment in planning-related decisions'.
- And only 12% upload reports via OASIS [Online Access to the index of Archaeological InvestigationS]
- **A dizzying array of formats and styles of output are produced, far exceeding the range of outputs traditionally captured by research resources and HERs. Local history groups are far less likely than those with a focus on archaeology to send research to HERs: just 23% report having done so. The case studies have found much of this research to be of considerable potential value to archaeological research resources'.**

Joint Canterbury Christ Church University,
Centre for Kent History and Heritage and the
Friends of Canterbury Archaeological Trust conference

EARLY MEDIEVAL KENT, 800–1220

Saturday 10 September 2016

Old Sessions House,
Canterbury Christ Church University,
Canterbury Campus

- **Research aims and objectives**
- 1. For English Heritage/Historic England, Community Groups and the sector more generally, to understand how community generated research can be used to develop and update Research Frameworks and, therefore enhance Historic Environment Records.
- How much research is generated by community groups/societies including community funded projects (for example by the HLF)?
- How is this research currently disseminated?
- What is the current value of this for informing historic environment planning related decisions, by enhancing Research Frameworks and HERs?
- What is the potential value of this research? Is it different for **different areas of interest, buried, standing and marine [archaeology/buildings]**?

Questions agreed for the literature review

- How is the journal/other publications of BALH structured? E.g. are the issues compiled around themes?
- How many articles do you think are submitted by the academic community? This will include honorary fellows etc. A rough approximation would be sufficient for this.
- How many articles are produced by groups?
- How many articles are produced by individuals? (we recognise that it may be difficult to pull these two points apart as individual researchers can have links with larger groups and vice versa.)
- Are some groups/individuals more active than others?
- Do the articles contain any links to websites/blogs or social media?
- Is there a prevalence for certain research topics or is it widespread? Do the groups registered with the BALH tend to just publish in your journal rather than other publications?

‘Organisations to be consulted or engaged with will include, but are not limited to’:

- Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)
- National Council for British Archaeology (CBA)
- CBA regional groups for the three case study areas (CBA West Midlands, CBA Yorkshire, CBA East)
- Historic Environment Forum (HEF)
- National societies such as Vernacular Architecture Group and the Victorian Society
- County and local history/ archaeology /architecture groups within the study areas
- Historic Environment Services (HERs, Conservation Officers)