

Maenclochog Community Excavation:

Participant Questionnaire Analysis



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Maenclochog Community Excavation: Participant Questionnaire Analysis

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Summary

The excavation at Maenclochog was a community led project which resulted from huge public interest in the history of Maenclochog and in particular the origins of the 'castle site'. The excavation was carried out by the local community and Cambria Archaeology (Dyfed Archaeological Trust) with support from Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, and funding obtained by PLANED, (Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development).

In order to evaluate the success or otherwise in delivering community benefits, participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire which was intended to capture their views on their experience at the end of the project. 13 of the 16 participants completed and returned questionnaires. The information gathered in this way has been used to inform this analysis. In addition, visitors to the site were encouraged to write comments in a visitors book.

The feedback from the questionnaires was overwhelmingly positive. This is a reflection both of the enthusiasm of the participants and the success of the partnership between Cambria Archaeology, PLANED and the community of Maenclochog.

Extract from one response:-

What was your favourite part of the event?

"The group experience and the fun we had together. The intrigue of digging and not really knowing what we would find and the satisfaction of uncovering the archaeology. The inspiration and enthusiasm of the staff."

Introduction

This successful partnership project was conceived and driven by the community of Maenclochog, a small village on the south side of the Preseli mountains in Pembrokeshire. Determined to discover more about the history and archaeology of their village, the community expressed their interest to the local community development organisation PLANED (Pembrokeshire Local Action Network for Enterprise and Development).

With support from PLANED, documentary research was commissioned from 'Trysor' (a local heritage consultancy) to discover more about a medieval castle, thought to have stood on the site of what is now the village car-park, but of which there is now no visible evidence. The survey identified that as well as the possible location of the castle, the site had been a manorial pound, and possibly also the location of an Iron Age defended enclosure.

PLANED helped the community start a local history group supported through the HLF funded RICHH project (Research, Interpretation and Celebration of Community, History and Heritage) which was itself set up in response to the broad interest in heritage expressed by communities across the region.

The Dyfed Archaeological Trust (DAT) was invited to develop a proposal for a community excavation which was presented to the community and discussed at the first meeting of the history group. A small-scale excavation involving two archaeologists from DAT working with up to 15 local participants subsequently took place over two-weeks in September 2007. The project was supported by Pembrokeshire Coast National Park (PCNP), and with funding obtained by PLANED from a European Trans-national project aiming to link heritage and culture to tourism in rural areas.

In two small trenches, the wall of the manorial pound, the stone foundations of the medieval castle wall, a defensive bank and ditch, and part of a round-house were all identified. At first these finds appeared to confirm the existence of the medieval castle and the Iron Age enclosure, but surprisingly, a radiocarbon sample from below the defensive bank returned a date between AD 880 and AD 1020, indicating there was a defended settlement at Maenclochog before the medieval castle was built following the Anglo-Norman conquest of Pembrokeshire in AD 1093.

Even more surprisingly, pottery dating from the 12th century, a radiocarbon date of between AD 980 and AD 1160, and plant remains from the central hearth, all indicated that the round house was probably occupied right up until the Anglo-Norman conquest. This is the first clear example of an early-medieval round house in south-west Wales.

To involve the wider community in the excavation, visits were organised from local schools and over 400 members of the public visited the site, several of whom were holidaying in the area and were specifically drawn to the village by news of the excavation. Participants were encouraged to interpret and explain their discoveries to the visitors.

A bilingual approach was adopted for all aspects of the project. This included simultaneous translation facilities at community meetings, a bilingual excavation report and "dig diary" produced and regularly updated by DAT during the excavation:

(<http://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/digdiary07/digdiarymaenclochog07.htm>).

There was also considerable media interest in the excavation, with radio, television and newspaper and internet coverage.

Presentations on the initial findings of the project were made to the community in Maenclochog and at the Pembrokeshire Archaeology Day School organised by DAT and PCNP.

The results of the project are being used to produce two interpretation panels in the village. A reader-friendly bilingual report has been completed and will be distributed to all the participants and the wider community. A digital version of the report is also available for downloading on the DAT web site.

Recruitment and publicity

PLANED were crucial in ensuring the wide dissemination of information about the project to local communities. This included leafleting the residents of Maenclochog and beyond. Adverts were placed in local newspapers and contacts were made with local community groups. In addition, flyers were distributed to local B&Bs to let visitors to the area know about the excavation.

Prior to, and during the excavation, press releases were produced for local and pan-Wales news media.

Participant attendance

Initially, people were given the option of participating in the project for several days, or for single 'taster sessions'. In the event, participants attended whenever they were able. Some people that had only intended to attend for a single day returned on subsequent days. Others that had not originally signed up, were also able to take part.

Evaluating the participants' experiences

In order to evaluate the success or otherwise in delivering community benefits, participants were asked to fill in a questionnaire which was intended to capture their views on their experience at the end of the project. 13 of the 16 participants completed and returned questionnaires.

The questionnaire was intended to record the age range of participants, to obtain a judgement on the quality of the 'product', suggested improvements, and an attempt to assess learning outcomes. The questionnaire is included as appendix 1. The information gathered in this way has been used to inform this analysis.

Community participation in the excavation was a great success and was enjoyed and highly rated by the participants. Participants gained practical experience of the methods and techniques of excavation and were introduced to building recording and graveyard recording, to encourage their future investigation of other aspects of the village's history. Participants also completed questionnaires providing feedback on their experiences. As well as the enjoyment and excitement of archaeological discovery, the participants also commented on the opportunity that the excavation had offered to get to know and build friendships with neighbours.

As well as making a significant contribution to the archaeological understanding of the village and the wider region, the project enabled local community members to find the resources to actively engage in the discovery of their past, learn new skills and discover new experiences and enthusiasms. The excavation raised awareness of the history of the village both within and beyond the local community, inspiring the pursuit of options for the enhancement of the car park to better reflect their discoveries.

Summary of questionnaire results

The main findings of the analysis are:-

- Community participation in the excavation was a great success and all participants rated the experience highly.

In particular:

- 100% considered it a very good or excellent learning experience.
- The expectations of all participants were met or exceeded.
- 92% of the volunteers indicated that their interest in heritage had been broadened by the experience.
- 92% considered that their knowledge of Maenclochogs' heritage had increased.
- The community's archaeological goals for the project were met, answering many of the participants' questions about the site and the history of the village.
- In addition to the archaeological and training objectives of the project participants also identified additional benefits. These focused on the opportunity that the excavation provided for participants to socialise, work as a team and meet a new group of 'very nice' and 'like-minded' people.
- All participants agreed that there should be more opportunities like this.

The visitors' comments book

A 'comments' book was also provided for visitors to the site to record their views and impressions. Here is a flavour of their comments:

'This is a fascinating opportunity for local people to be involved in uncovering our heritage....Its very exciting to have found proof that there was habitation here in previous centuries and gives people a sense of continuity and pride in the history of the village'.

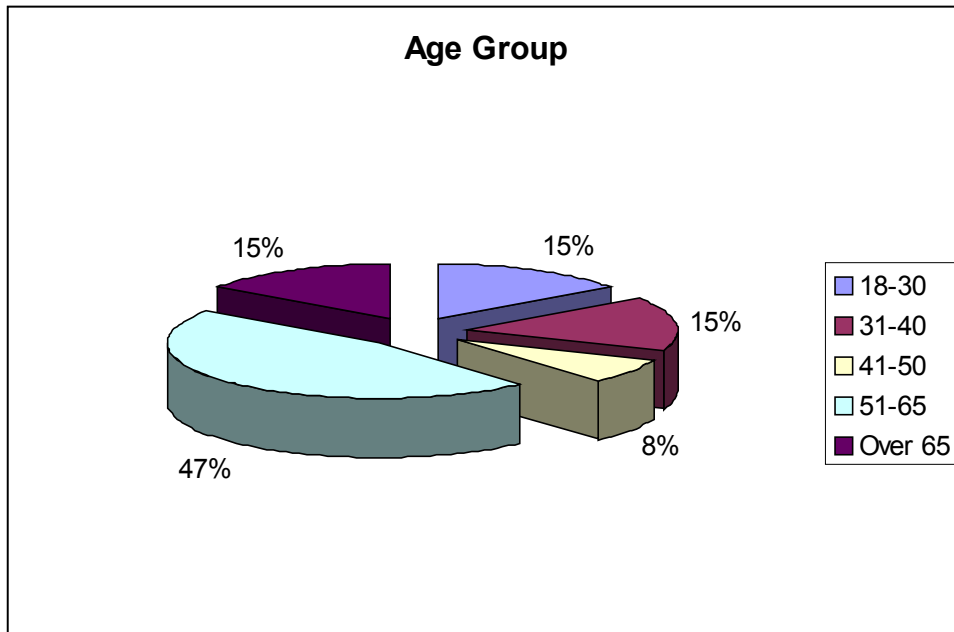
'What a great opportunity to discover our ancient past and see what lies beneath the ground that we take for granted!! Fascinating to see the ditches and walls and old stone. What a treasure to behold'.

'I find the excavation fascinating. It should give additional interest to people visiting Maenclochog'.

'Amazing. Great to see the community working together on such a great find'.

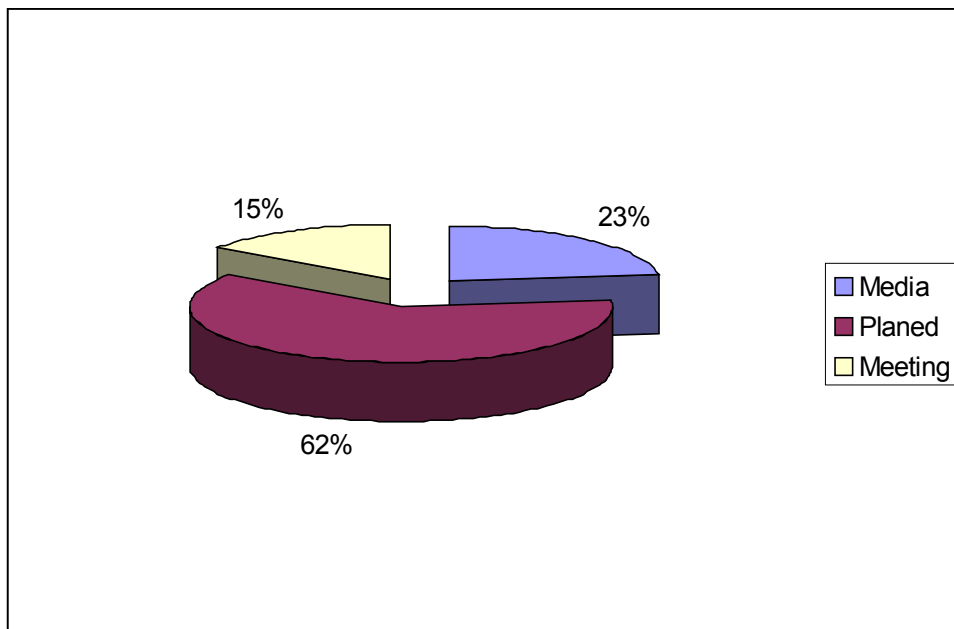
Questionnaire Results

1. Age Demography



The age range shows the largest segment with the age range of 51-65 age group. In total, 62% (which including the over 65 group) of volunteers were over 51 years of age. 38% of the participants were under 50. This demographic may reflect the socio-economic situation of the volunteers, e.g. self-employed, retired or just having the time and the interest. 61% of volunteers were female.

2. How did you hear about the excavation?



The majority, 62%, of the participants heard about the excavation from PLANED, with the second largest group 23% through the media (local News Papers, County Echo and Western Telegraph). 15% heard of the project through community meetings.

3. What made you apply for a place?

Answers included:-

"Curiosity about local legend"

"Intellectual curiosity/new experience."

"Went to a meeting and thought it sounded very interesting"

"I was curious to see at first hand the techniques used on a dig"

"....wanted to increase my understanding of the local history."

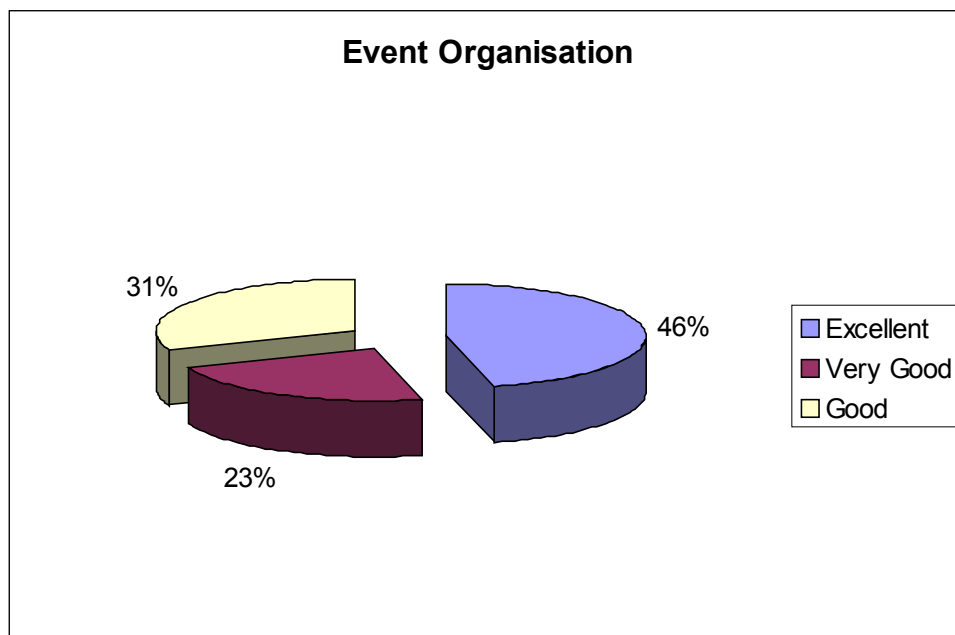
".....Friendly answer to initial enquiry."

Respondents' answers inform us that most have a fascination with the history of the area. Some were curious about archaeology and had always wished to take part in an archaeological dig. Others wanted to increase their knowledge and understanding of their local heritage.

4. Quality and provision of community projects

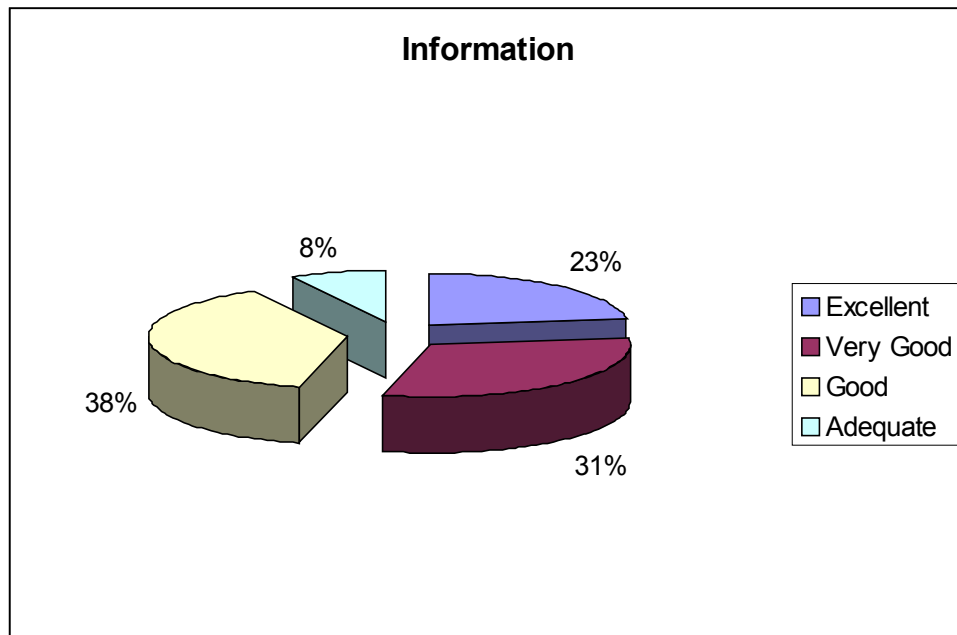
In this question participants were asked to rate various aspects of their experience as either poor, adequate, good, very good or excellent.

4.1 Event Organisation



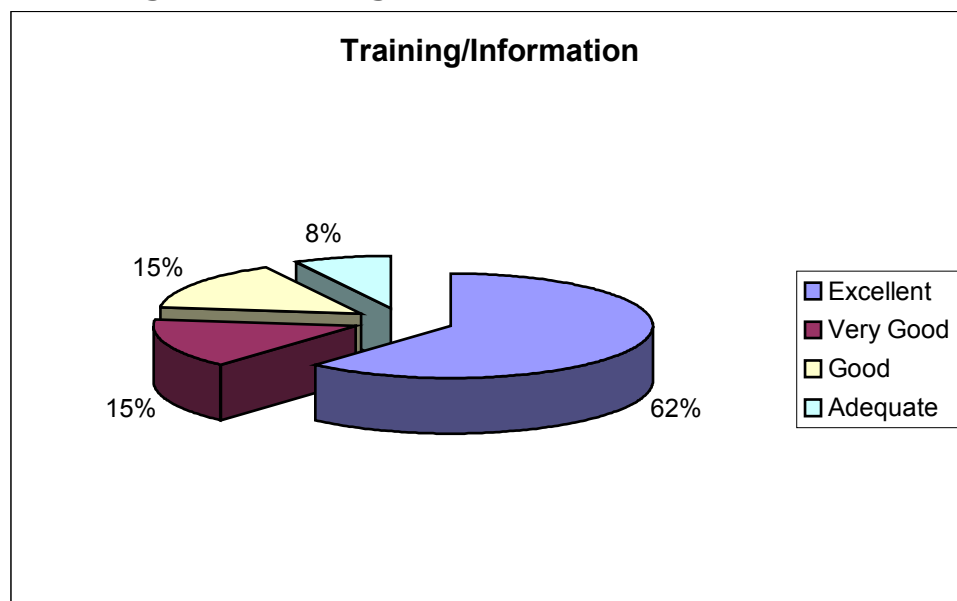
Respondents' answers tell us that the majority, 69%, rated the organisational aspect of the excavation as 'excellent' or 'very good'. The remaining group of 31% rated the organisation aspect as 'good'.

4.2 Information sent beforehand



The majority, 54%, rated the information supplied before hand as either 'excellent' or 'very good'. Nobody considered it to be 'poor'.

4.3 Training/Information given on site



It is apparent that the majority of volunteers, 77%, were clearly very satisfied with the training and information provided on site.

4.4 Learning Experience

31% very good

69% excellent

All of the participants who returned questionnaires rated their learning experience as either 'very good' or 'excellent'.

The overall learning experience was the most highly rated aspect of the project on which the participants were questioned.

5. What did you expect from the activity

Example responses:-

"To glean an insight into the history of the village, with a hands-on experience."

"Plenty of involvement and much to learn, and a good craique."

"To get muddy and wet, get to know some interesting people, and learn something new."

"Bit of hard work. Opportunity to learn how hands on archaeology works. Possibility of determining existence of castle on site or dispelling myth, rumour, legend."

"To have a better understanding of the methods used to excavate and analyze/interpret a site."

"To discover more about the history of Maenclochog"

The expectations of the participants were not unrealistic. There was a reasonable/recognisable understanding of what sort of activities one might expect an archaeological excavation to comprise and what sort of understanding could be gained.

6. Did it meet your expectations?

The questionnaire provided a 'yes' or 'no' choice in response to this question. However some participants provided more information. It was therefore clear that expectations had been met and in some cases exceeded.

9 circled Yes, 1 identified Yes and No, 1 Yes added two pluses (++), 1 added the word Exceeded and another added Yes Absolutely.

6.1 Examples of how expectations were or were not met

"Friendliness of the professionals and their enthusiasm."

"I was somewhat disappointed that so few members of the immediate community wished to participate in a project requested by the community despite adequate publicity. However, as the dig progressed the number of visitors increased as the book eventually showed."

"Actually the dig exceeded all my expectations – not only was the castle site found: but the hands on digging was so enjoyable + rewarding...."

"By actually digging myself under the guidance of professionals + also by seeing the slow emergence of evidence such as changes in soil colour I was able to understand better accounts I had read of archaeological discoveries."

"I expected that we would be able to uncover more than we did."

"My expectations were exceeded due to all the findings that were made."

"The staff interaction and group experience was excellent and we enjoyed ourselves."

6.2. How could we improve our provision?

"More time which, of course, means more money"

"I don't think you need to. Your manners and professionalism + willingness to engage with all comers at a level they could understand was wonderful."

"Difficult to say – it was a shame that there is no way of preserving a section of either trench intact to increase visitor interest in the area...."

"You were fine as you were."

"Posters advertising meetings such as Duncan's forthcoming lecture on the site should be sent to all volunteers, the Globe Inn, Tavern Sinc, Schools, all shops, and community council members so that maximum coverage is obtained throughout Maenclochog, Rosebush and Llancefn."

"Perhaps some hot soup at lunch time! And more of an idea of how long you could be expected to stay out till (Although having said that, I liked the fact that volunteers could leave as and when they needed)."

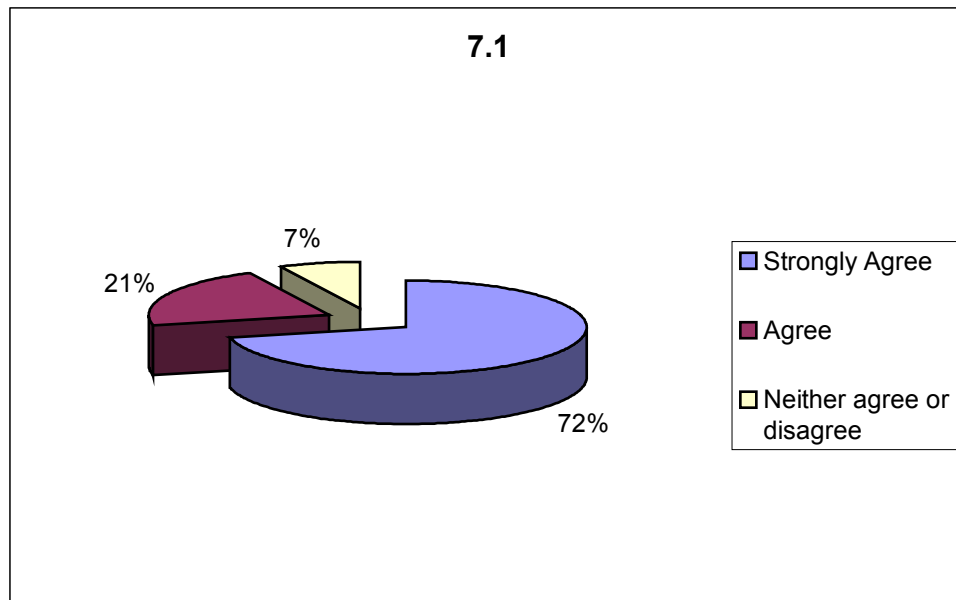
"The archaeological instruction appeared to be a little ad hoc. It would have been useful to have received a more structured and more detailed instruction."

7. Assessment of learning outcomes

A series of statements were set out and participants were asked to rank each on a scale of 1-5 as to how far they agreed with them.

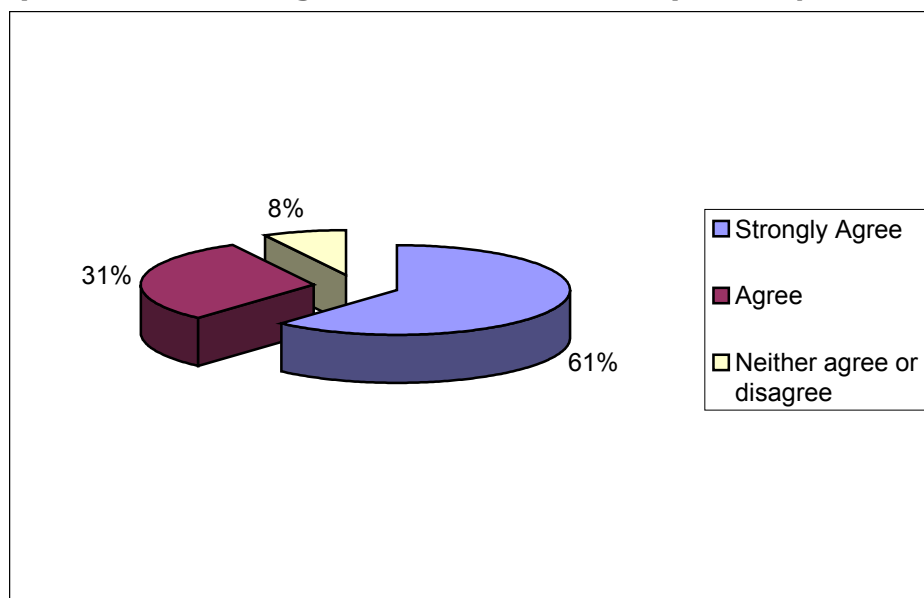
(1=strongly disagree, 3 =neither agree or disagree, 5=strongly agree)

7.1 *I have always been interested in heritage*



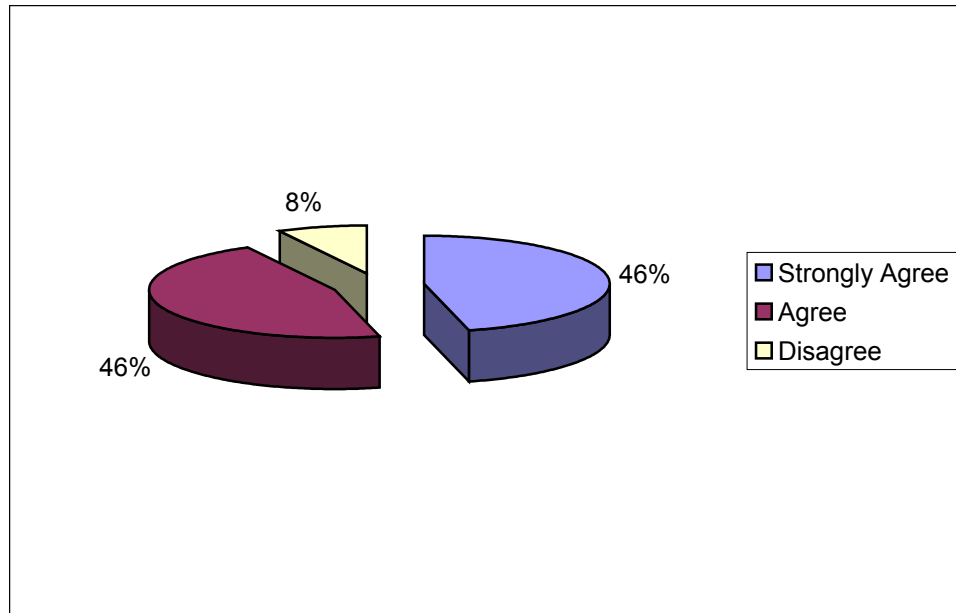
Results indicate that 94% of respondents have a strong interest in heritage.

7.2 *My interest in heritage has been broadened by this experience*



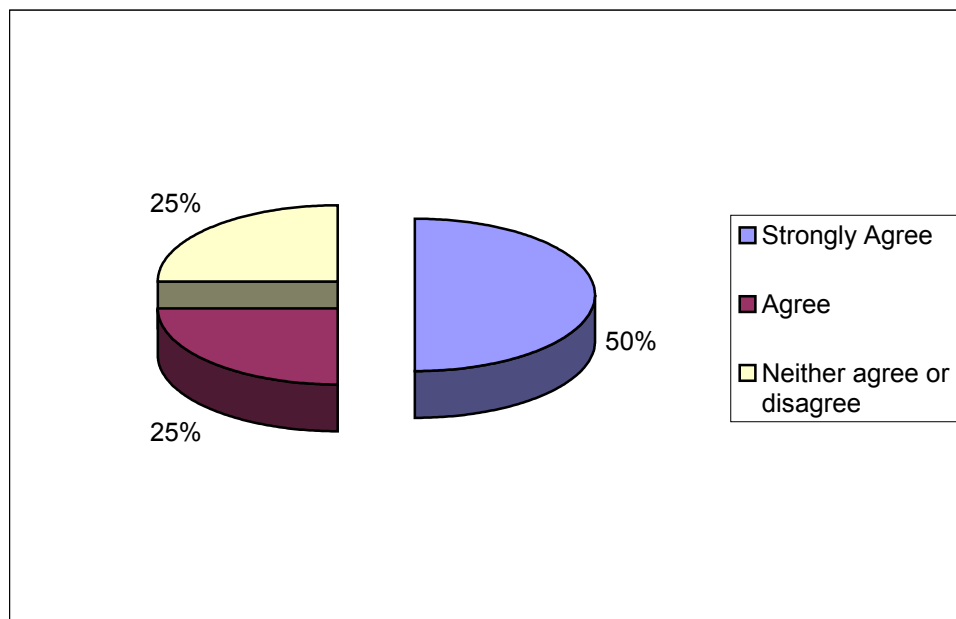
92% of respondents agreed that their interest in heritage had been broadened by the project.

7.3 *I have learnt a lot about the heritage of my local area.*



There was a strong positive response to this question. 92% of respondents either agree or strongly agree with this statement. However it was not made clear in the question whether the participants considered the excavation to have taken place in their local area or whether they had travelled to take part.

7.4 *I have learnt new skills*



One of the participants who had previously taken part in archaeological excavations did not feel this question was applicable to them. 75% of the other respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement.

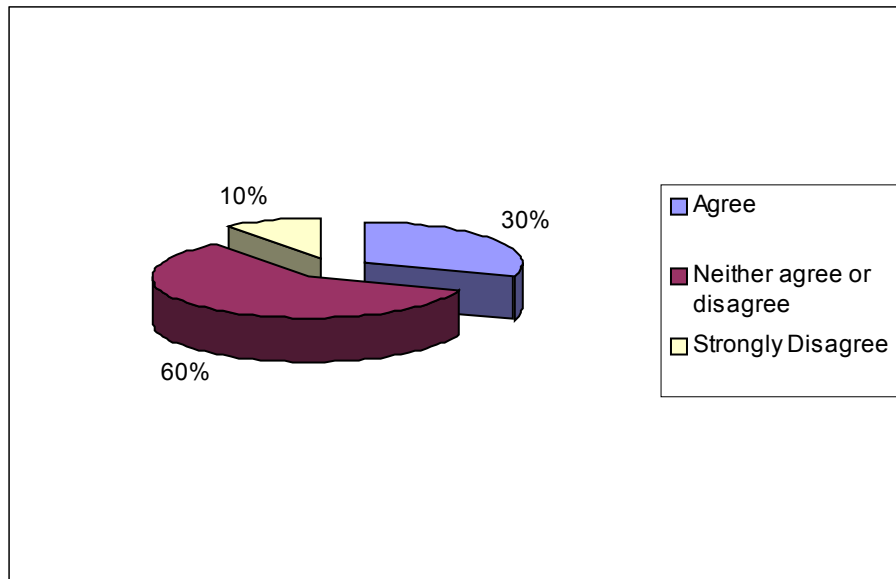
7.5 *This was a good experience*

100% of respondents strongly agree with this statement

7.6 *This was a bad experience*

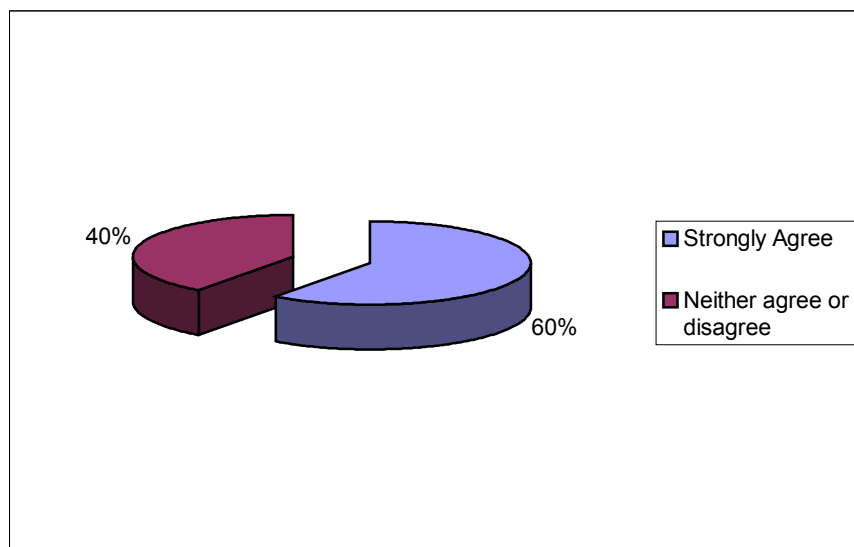
10 out of the 13 participants strongly disagreed with this statement the remainder either did not complete this question or registered 0 or N/A.

7.7 *My self-confidence has increased*



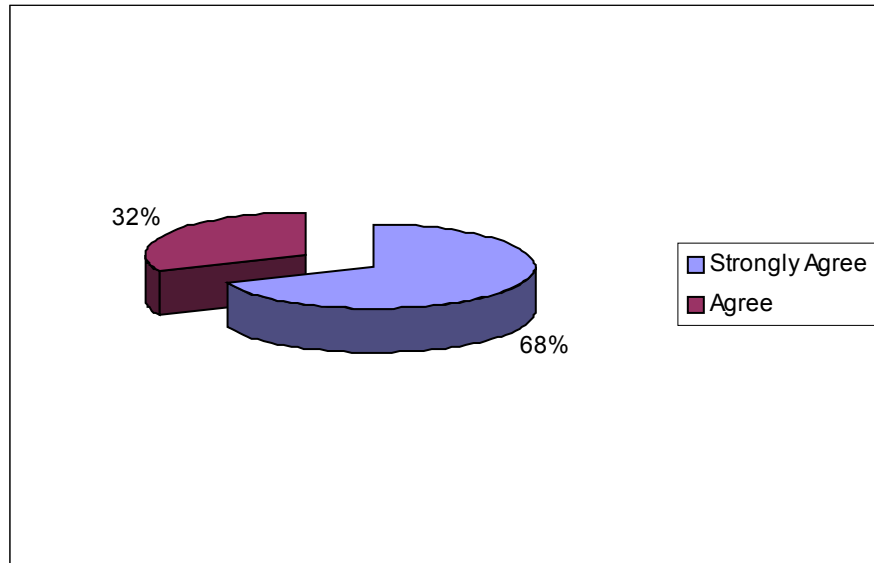
30% of respondents indicated that their self-confidence had been enhanced by the experience. Some respondents did not consider this to be a relevant question.

7.8 *I will use what I have learnt in the future*



60% of respondents indicated that they strongly agree with this statement.

7.9 ***I believe there should be more opportunities like this***



Everybody agreed that there should be more opportunities like this.

7.10 ***I think that heritage is important to local communities***

All strongly agreed with this statement.

8.0 What was your favourite part of the event? (you can have more than one!)

"The group experience and the fun we had together. The intrigue of digging and not really knowing what we would find and the satisfaction of uncovering the archaeology. The inspiration and enthusiasm of the staff."

"Discovering bits of pottery revealing new layers. Meeting very nice people."

"Learning about archaeology... (and) the history of the area. Meeting nice people."

"Seeing the outline of the Iron Age hut – Magic!"

"post-holes and charcoal bits"

"Going home feeling we had done some useful work"

"Learning to talk to visitors, reasonably accurately, about aspects of (the) dig."

"Enthusiasing the odd child to, hopefully become interested in a really worthwhile occupation."

"No single part – it was simply an interesting experience all round."

Conculsion

Through the questionnaire we have been able to gather an understanding of how the participants in the project have viewed their experience. It is undoubtedly a subjective view but without testing participants before and after their experience it would be very difficult to be wholly objective. Despite only being a relatively small number of responses these account for over 80% of the participants.

Overall the responses have been extremely positive with all of the responses highly rating their experience.

As a methodology it has been useful but could be developed and honed to provide more detailed data for developing future community projects.

Appendix 1 - Participants Questionnaire

EVALUATION FORM

Event	
Location	
Date	

If you would prefer to fill in the form anonymously, please leave this section blank.

Name	Miss / Ms / Mrs / Mr (<i>please circle</i>)		
Address			
Postcode		Telephone no.	
E mail			

What age group are you in?

Under 18 ☐ 18 -30 ☐ 31-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 51-65 ☐ Over 65 ☐

How did you hear about the excavation?

--

And what made you apply for a place?

--

Please answer the following questions to give your frank opinion so that we can improve future community projects.

Event organisation	poor	adequate	good	very good	excellent
Information sent beforehand	poor	adequate	good	very good	excellent
Training/information given on site	poor	adequate	good	very good	excellent
Learning Experience	poor	adequate	good	very good	excellent

What did you expect from this activity?

Please give an example of how your expectations were or were not met

How could we improve our provision:

Could you indicate, on a scale of 1 – 5, how far you agree with the following statements?
(1 = strongly disagree, 3 = neither agree nor disagree, 5 = strongly agree) 1 -5

I have always been interested in heritage.....

My interest in heritage has been broadened by this experience

I have learnt a lot about the heritage of my local area

I have gained new skills

This was a good experience.....

This was a bad experience.....

My self-confidence has increased

I will use what I have learned in the future

I believe that there should be more opportunities like this

I think that heritage is important to local communities

What was your favourite part of the event? (you can have more than one!)

--

7.12 Please use the space below to make any further comments

--

Thank you for taking the time to complete this evaluation form. Your feedback will help us to plan future training. If you would like o participate in further events please contact Cambria Archaeology on 01558 823131

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Paratowyd yr adroddiad hwn gan / This report has been prepared by Richard Jones

Swydd / Position: HM Archaeologist

Llofnod / Signature Dyddiad / Date 18/06/2008

Mae'r adroddiad hwn wedi ei gael yn gywir a derbyn sêl bendith
This report has been checked and approved by Louise Austin

ar ran Ymddiriedolaeth Archaeolegol Dyfed Cyf.
on behalf of Dyfed Archaeological Trust Ltd.

Swydd / Position: Principal Archaeologist – Heritage Management

Llofnod / Signature Dyddiad / Date 18/06/2008

Yn unol â'n nôd i roddi gwasanaeth o ansawdd uchel, croesawn unrhyw sylwadau sydd
gennych ar gynnwys neu strwythur yr adroddiad hwn

As part of our desire to provide a quality service we would welcome any comments you may
have on the content or presentation of this report