The Public Archaeology of Treasure

edited by

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Acknowledgements

Introduction: the Public Archaeology of Treasure

Howard Williams, Samuel Clague, Natasha Carr and James Raine

Setting the stage for The Public Archaeology of Treasure*, this chapter presents the complex intersections of 'treasure' in archaeological teaching and research and archaeology's interactions with a range of different publics on local, regional, national and international scales. The chapter also identifies the global issues in heritage conservation, management and interpretation as well as the looting of archaeological sites and the illicit trade in antiquities relating to 'treasure(s)' as legally defined, popularly perceived and metaphorically articulated. Having introduced the breadth and complexity of 'treasure(s)', we survey the 2020 student conference from whence this project derived before reviewing the span and foci of the book itself.*

> Will you search through the loamy earth for me?
> Climb through the briar and bramble
> I'll be your treasure
>
> J. Flynn (2014)

These are opening lyrics to the Johnny Flynn song accompanying the popular television drama series *Detectorists* (2014–2017), created and written by Mackenzie Crook. The show is a light-hearted comedy focusing on two metal detectorists from the fictional Danebury Metal Detecting Club (Andy Stone played by Mackenzie Crook and Lance Stater played by Toby Jones). Over the three seasons aired to date, we track their camaraderie, relationships and petty conflicts as they seek out artefacts in the Essex countryside. We are shown treasure-hunting to be a solitary outdoor pastime. Trinkets and trifles from bygone times are seen as a desired goal for these dedicated hobbyists but also their discovery is regarded also as a mechanism for dialogue with the human past through the landscape as well as an opportunity for building sustained friendships in today's world.

Detectorists gives 'treasure' an agency and aura. It is referenced as shorthand for all kinds of archaeological artefacts uncovered from the soil: from can pulls to military buttons. Eclectic and elusive, a reward for the patient, diligent and faithful explorer, 'treasure' is also an aspiration for life that can take many forms beyond the material. Moreover, *Detectorists'* treasured things are given a quasi-preternatural agency. They might stay tenaciously concealed and never found (as with Sexred's ship-burial in series 1). Treasure might be discovered unexpected below ground after many hours of fruitless searching (following a suspicion that one of Lance's detector readings was something special he finds what is described as a 'Late Saxon Gold Jewelled Aestell' in series 2). Gold coins might be even 'miraculously' found above ground (items from a Roman hoard disturbed by ploughing and collected by magpies which finally drop from a birdsnest at the end of series 3). Treasures thus become accessible and tangible through their interaction with, and definition by, their discoverers and investigators in a specific Essex landscape. Their trade for profit is judiciously avoided by the show, but Lance Stater takes the utmost pride in his *aestel* when he photographs it on temporary display in the British Museum close to the Sutton Hoo helmet and the Lewis Chessmen where he is credited as 'finder' (*Detectorists* Christmas Special 2015).

Treasure's agency in *Detectorists* also finds voice through Flynn's aforementioned opening song in each episode. Hidden rare and precious items cry out to be found, explored, studied and shared. Ultimately, the story implies that old and buried things plea to be discovered so that their stories can told for

posterity. This romantic conception of treasure manifests itself most clearly in series 3 where 'mystical wisdom' seems to motivate Lance's engagement with the landscape (see also Greene this volume). This notion also chimes closely with the choice of a 'speaking object' in series 2 (an *aestel* inspired by the famous late 9th-century Alfred's Jewel, an artefact now displayed in the Ashmolean Museum in Oxford found at North Petherton, Somerset in 1693 which bears an inscription declaring in the first-person that: *Aelfred mec heht gewyrcan* – 'Alfred ordered me to be made' (Hinton 2005: 129)).[1] Lance takes his superstitions further by reflecting how, on temporary display at the British Museum, his *aestel* appeared like a 'wild animal trapped in a cage'. Subsequently, the apparition of an Anglo-Saxon monk manifests on Lance's slide during his presentation to the metal detecting group. His run of bad luck subsequently takes many forms. Fearing there is a 'curse of the gold' (having not to found anything since the *aestel*), Lance buys some ancient coins from a dealer and reburies them to reciprocate and assuage the earth itself. Thus ends his run of bad luck (*Detectorists* Christmas Special 2015).

The programme's vision of 'treasure' is made most clearly in series 3. In the final scene, Andy Stone reflects 'I don't know why we do it!'. Lance responds, expounding on the significance of metal detecting as less about the 'treasure' in itself, but the significance of the finds for a higher purpose of uncovering something truer and more direct about life in past times:

> Metal detecting is the closest you'll get to time travel. See, archaeologists: they gather up the facts, piece the jigsaw together, work out how we lived and find the buildings we lived in. But what we do, that's different. We unearth the scattered memories, mine for stories, fill in the personality. Detectorists: we're time travellers (*Detectorists* series 3, episode 6)

The misleading and romanticised nature of Lance Stater's words aside, *Detectorists* may be a 'first' in a positive and popular portrayal of the burgeoning hobby of metal detecting and its relationship with the English landscape (Keighren and Norcup 2020). In doing so, it perhaps gives direct respectability and legitimisation to an activity that is causing untold damage to the UK's archaeological heritage including funerary sites (see Daubney and Tierney this volume). Problematic dimensions of metal detecting in the programme include explicitly seeking out furnished early medieval graves (series 1) and disturbing a Roman burial site (series 2) without consideration of the ethics involved. In contrast, professional archaeologists are portrayed as unethical and inert under the pressure from developers and the planning process; this is illustrated by the site supervisor who covers up the destruction of a Roman mosaic as it would slow down a new building project (series 3). The *Detectorists* characterisation of metal detectoring is thus misleading and perhaps irresponsible, part of a broader romanticisation of both legal and illegal detecting in the UK (e.g. BBC 2022). *Detectorists* is part of a broader phenomenon across the media and popular culture in which treasure-hunting is presented as eccentric but harmless, material-focused but also life-affirming, contemplative and even spiritual. The television programme thus serves as appropriate introduction to the many challenges archaeologists face in exploring the public archaeology of treasure.

Part I: Many treasures in our world

Detectorists is but one of our contemporary society's many engagements with the archaeological record, revealing popular fascinations with the human past mediated by material culture: items often called 'treasure(s)'. Set against this background, how do archaeologists engage with the many challenges as well as the many potentials of working with the public using ideas and practices of 'treasure' and 'treasure hunting'?

Before proceeding, it is important to remember that 'treasure' is a noun referring to 'wealth or riches stored or accumulated, esp. in the form of precious metals; gold or silver coin; hence in general, money,

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[1] https://www.ashmolean.org/alfred-jewel

riches and wealth'. Yet 'treasure(s)' can also be used figuratively to refer to any valuable or prized thing or quality and a place to store said items in a 'treasury' (OED Online 2022a). As a verb, 'treasure' has more specific associations: 'put away or lay aside (anything of value) for preservation, security, or future use; to hoard or store up' (OED Online 2022b). Given this mutability as a concept, 'treasure(s)' is widely used and extensively misused in archaeology and the discipline's many public educational, engagement and entertainment intersections. It is often a colloquial shorthand for any discovered ancient artefact or assemblages, and the act of their curation.

Treasure's legal definition varies across modern nations and regions. Yet, significantly, these frameworks both influence and operate in tension with popular perceptions and behaviours, including treasure-hunting hobbyists' practices and the media. For instance, in England and Wales, 'treasure' is defined in a complicated and precise fashion by the 1996 Treasure Act as principally all gold and silver objects and groups of coins over 300 years old at the time of discovery, plus prehistoric base-metal assemblages (from 2003) (see Boyle this volume).[2]

'Treasure' is thus a polysemous and mutable subset of the archaeological record and also refers to a specific set of processes and practices associated with preserving and curating in dialogue with legal definitions and procedures. Its meaning and significance fluctuate depending on context. Both archaeologists and those involved in the creation of popular culture are aware of this shifting ambiguity as well as the international fascinating and (often illicit) trade in 'treasures'. Even for fictional archaeologist Dr Henry 'Indiana' Jones Junior, who had no qualms about ransacking indigenous 'treasures', there is the firm aspiration that, once retrieved, they are acquired and installed in a museum. Indeed, such popular and stereotypical Hollywood genres evoke 'treasures' in complex, ambiguous and sometimes metaphorical and illusory fashions. Notably, in *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* (2008) the 'treasure' of El Dorado proves (as so often it does) to be 'knowledge', but also a curse for its discoverers rather than the blessing and promise of wealth it is imagined to be (mirroring the story arcs in Ark of the Covenant in *Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981) and the Holy Grail in *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989)).

Such complex semantics are not restricted to archaeology and archaeologists in film, but to all ancient (and archaeological) treasures in our popular culture. A striking example in the history of film is the famous paraphrasing of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* by Sam Spade (played by Humphrey Bogart) when he identifies the Maltese Falcon, over which so many have lost their lives, as 'the stuff that dreams are made of' (*The Maltese Falcon* 1941). Ancient precious things are the aspirations of our many quests for fame, glory, wealth and immortality but often inevitably these desires are fragile, fleeting and failing, thus revealing our vainglories and delusions. Still, treasure punctuates and populates video games as rewards and goals in immersive fictional landscapes which often aim to replicate past times including prehistoric, ancient, medieval and early modern worlds (see Nicholson 2019; Ezzeldin 2019; O'Connor 2000). Equally, treasures populate our plays, novels, television shows as well as many genres of films via infinitely varied forms and contexts.

Treasure in the real world complements these many fictional representations. It is imagined and discovered on land and under water; its discovery is widely reported through newspapers and online media. Treasure is often our art and becomes the subject and inspiration for our art. Treasure is housed in our museums and art galleries but also our imaginations, replicated for our homes and public spaces in all manner of scales and media. Moreover, the process of its discovery is itself often a theatre of reporting and interaction between archaeologist and other agents. Thus, treasure is a phantasm across our media and not a month goes by when another story of metal-detectorists uncovering surprise finds of 'treasure' does not hit the news (BBC News 2021).

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[2] For more refined details, see: https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/24/section/1; https://finds.org.uk/treasure

So, ultimately, the values, significances, tensions and conflicts surrounding 'treasure' – legal, cultural, artistic, monetary among them – are all of our modern-day creation and inheritance. People today generate and recreate 'treasures' by affording material cultures of all forms, meanings, values and significance from the point of discovery or encounter through their circulation, consumption and display and sometimes through their loss, destruction and beyond. For treasure is never truly 'discovered' even if hunted for and found. Rather, material cultures are sometimes defined as 'treasures' and set up in relationship with our practices and storytelling (Shanks 2007: 273). 'Treasure' is thus loaded with rich and interleaving connotations, a source of misrepresentation and deception, commodification and fantasy, as well as a focus of fascination with rare and valuable, prized and honoured things. Treasures are about acquisition and desires to acquire. They embody aesthetics, pride, identity, faith and nostalgia in our contemporary past, as well as a complex nest of cultural and monetary values. These traditions and practices are drawn from deep-time historical traditions from the human past and our 21st-century regimes of enmeshing people and things.

Nested within these complex thought worlds is the persistent practice of 'treasure hunting'. The deliberate retrieval of many items from the soil without careful recording and reporting, destined often for private collection or sale, remains a considerable challenge given the loose frameworks in place within the UK, and particularly for England and Wales. From illegal and dubious practices to large-scale hobbyists operating with landowner's permission within the law, such ongoing practices damage the archaeological record and remove objects from their contexts, thus defusing public access and knowledge and jettisoning the possible legacy of their inheritance by future generations (e.g. Gill 2017; thePipeLine 2021a and b). Indeed, it is clear that the true scale of illegal and unreported finds can only be crudely estimated, and the looting of archaeological sites and the trade in antiquities is a worldwide blight far removed from the fond parable of *Detectorists* (BBC News 2022a; see also Gill 2010).

Yet, here lies the inherent contradiction for the public archaeology of treasure. Archaeology came into being from a long European antiquarian tradition of looting, collecting and the classification of 'treasures' of all kinds (Schnapp 1996). Hence, unsurprisingly, archaeologists have had a long-term love-hate relationship with 'treasure' in its own history, teaching and research, interactions with the media and in heritage spaces (e.g. Brittain and Clack 2007: 19–20). Often, archaeologists have avoided and denounced amateurs and criminals as 'treasure-hunters' and 'treasure-seekers', just as they have attempted to distance themselves from the imperial, colonial and nationalistic legacies in which antiquarians and early archaeologists frequently operated in relation to treasures. Yet archaeologists must own this legacy, since archaeology has invested our popular cultures with treasures, fashioned our fantasies. Indeed, some of the most enduring tropes of horror result from disturbing graves and opening chests of treasure, from Egyptian mummies to pirate gold (Brown this volume). Treasure is blessed and cursed, and works to bless and curse archaeological endeavours and archaeologists. 'Treasure' is today thus simultaneously revered and reviled by archaeologists in their public communication, engagement and education: a concept that is often ignored and never neither fully justified nor banished from use.

Despite these unresolved legal, practical and ethical issues, the interests of metal detectorists and archaeologists are sometimes unfairly characterised as in stark opposition to each other in seeking out old things in the soil and telling their stories. Collaborations between metal detectorists and archaeologists have increasingly fostered responsible and sustainable research and public engagement. This collaboration can take the public beyond the act of discovery to afford rich and detailed engagement with the human journey from prehistory to recent times, including a variety of 'time travelling' experiences facilitated by investigating items recovered (Holtorf 2017). Such projects might be achieved through a host of activities from hands-on fieldwork and finds-processing through to exposure to academic and popular publications, digital databases and social media (e.g. Hinton 2005: 1–6, 260–261; see also Hadley and Richards 2016). This rich and complex process of long-term collaboration and public engagement

is illustrated effectively by many dryland treasure finds over recent decades, such as the Staffordshire Hoard (Butterworth 2019; Greaves this volume). Yet, this point also applies to wetlands. For instance, the Thames foreshore is the sinuous stage for one such successful long-term collaboration between archaeologists and amateurs. Building on antiquarian and early archaeological surveys and investigations, the long-term extensive and systematic work of the Thames Discovery Programme from 2008 exemplifies good practice. Collaborating with the Thames Mudlarks and the Portable Antiquities Scheme, the project illustrates the value of searching for 'treasures' of all kinds, from Palaeolithic flint hand-axes to relics of London's Blitz on the foreshore. This collaboration between professionals, academics and amateurs has shed light on the long-term story of human activity along the Thames from prehistory to the 20th century via a public and community archaeology programme, including fieldwork, events and activities as well as exhibitions and online resources and interfaces (Cohen 2017a and b).

Figure 1: Tweet by archaeologist Spencer Carter (@microburin) reflecting on the manifold significances of 'treasure' in public engagement (Reproduced with permission)

So, while attitudes and relationships with 'treasure' and 'treasure-hunters' are ambivalent (see Williams this volume), sometimes the term treasure and amateur treasure hunting can be positively mobilised for good by the archaeological profession, including for public engagement and in combating the looting of, and trade in, antiquities. Indeed, some archaeologists have worked hard to reclaim the term 'treasure' in positive and constructive fashions away from the commodified and fetishised associations. For example, the invaluable cultural information encoded in mundane artefacts was consciously evoked in the recent television series *The Great British Dig*, in which even humble and fragmented Romano-British pot sherds and coins are collectively referred to as 'Roman treasures' (Series 1, Episode 1, 2021). Moreover, 'treasures' can be deployed to emphasise the potential damage of climate change to archaeological landscapes and heritage assets (Rowlatt 2022). Archaeologists often continue to use 'treasure' in the colloquial sense in order to describe precious metal hoards, from the Staffordshire Hoard to the Galloway Hoard, for various publics (Fern and Butterworth 2022; Goldberg and Davis 2021; Greaves this volume). As Carter (2021) has cogently articulated, 'treasure' can be a term actively and inclusively deployed to encapsulate human stories and public engagement through the discovery and analysis of material culture from the human past for communities today (Figure 1). With critical and careful awareness of its semantic baggage, 'treasure' can be used to afford an enchantment to the quotidian and the prosaic as much as affording fresh readings of precious and rare artefacts and assemblages (see also Brophy and Williams this volume).

Part II: Reviewing the conference

The 5th University of Chester Archaeology Student Conference took place on 31 January 2020 in the lecture theatre of the Grosvenor Museum, Chester. It was complemented by an online Twitter conference on the following morning, 1 February 2020 (Figure 2). Professor Howard Williams opened proceedings, welcoming the students, staff, academics, heritage specialists and members of the public in attendance. As well as introducing the conference theme – *The Public Archaeology of Treasure* – he identified the topics of each session: what is meant by 'treasure'; how do we use it as a term; how do we combat the plundering of sites and the discovery and trade in archaeological artefacts?

Treasure meanings and treasure discoveries

The first session was chaired by Adam Andre. Final-year Archaeology student Jack Douglas presented: 'Rusty Connections: How Archaeologists Keep Up with Metal Detectorists', assessing the success of metal detecting in liaison within specific archaeological projects, using the case study of the fieldwork conducted to reveal the winter camp of the Viking Great Army at Torksey (Lincolnshire) (Hadley and Richards 2016). In addition to the benefits metal-detected finds afford to researchers, Douglas identified potential for community archaeology dimensions including the ongoing untapped potential to work with disadvantaged groups and others with specific traumatic experiences (cf. Everill *et al.* 2020). Douglas set these positive initiatives within the context of current guidelines (such as the 'Code of Conduct' of the National Council for Metal Detecting) and a long-running Portable Antiquities Scheme for England and Wales (PAS) (see also chapters by Boyle, Clarke and Reavill in this volume). However, in noting the lack of legal obligation to report items not defined as 'treasure' in the UK, Douglas highlighted how many finds will not be reported and studied and site locations and entire landscapes that are therefore being systematically robbed of their valuable archaeological resources. In other words, despite the best efforts of the PAS, nighthawking, vagaries in reporting, and large commercial rallies are among the many issues

Figure 2: The audience at the Grosvenor Museum lecture theatre for the 5th University of Chester Archaeology Student Conference, 31 January 2020

Figure 3: Jack Douglas presenting 'Rusty Connections'

fostering ongoing tensions between metal detectorists and archaeologists (Figure 3).

Tackling heritage crime and the illicit trade in antiquities

Chaired by Jacob Adams, the second session explored the illicit trading of antiquities and heritage crimes committed on national and global stages. It identified key areas for the prevention of this, along with some positives that have resulted. Jack Emery presented 'The Theft of Culture: A Critical Analysis of Heritage Crime and the Illicit Trade in Antiquities'. In assessing the lack of prosecutions made against the offenders of heritage crimes. Using the Nighthawking Survey of 2006, Emery highlighted that of the 240 sites subjected to illegal metal detecting, only 26 took legal action against the offenders and attributed this to a failing of authorities in exercising heritage specific legislation. Indeed, the first prosecution of the Treasure Act 1996 was some 14 years later in February 2010 (Shelbourn 2014). Additionally, it was suggested that in comparison to larger illicit actions, smaller crimes of theft and local heritage damage are

Figure 4: Jack Emery presenting 'The Theft of Culture'

Figure 5: Alfie Brear presenting 'The Heritage Crime of ISIS and the Illicit Trade in Antiquities'

treated as of lesser criminal significance depending upon the monetary value of the crime (Figure 4). However, Emery highlighted new initiatives and how more significant crimes, as with the recent unreported discovery and distribution of the Herefordshire Viking Hoard in 2015, have now attracted prosecution, guilty verdicts and the subsequent sentencing of the detectorists (Hoverd *et al.* 2020; see also Reavill this volume).[3] Looking to the future, Emery outlined a necessity for further heritage crimes to be exposed and prosecuted more swiftly and systematically to act as a deterrent against the plundering of archaeological sites, monuments and landscapes (see also thePipeLine 2022a).

Alfie Brear next tackled the international scene, presenting 'The Heritage Crimes of ISIS and the Illicit Trade in Antiquities'. In the context of the expansion of the Islamic State (IS) from March 2013 in northern Iraq and Syria, mass looting of archaeological locales coincided with the destruction of religious sites and secular state institutions including museums (Figure 5). Brear considered how Roman temples and other ruins in Palmyra, Syria, have been destroyed by IS out of a religious opposition to

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[3] See also: https://www.algao.org.uk/england; https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/caring-for-heritage/heritage-crime/tackling/; https://www.nationalruralcrimenetwork.net/best-practice/protecting-englands-heritage/. See also Paul Barford's regular blog for all issues regarding artefact hunting and the market in portable antiquities: http://paul-barford.blogspot.com/

non-Islamic idols and Western perceptions and values afforded to these sites and monuments (Isakhan and González Zarandona 2018). He also considered how Syrian and Iraqi artefacts have been plundered from museums and archaeological sites and sold by IS via the established international trade in illicit antiquities to provide a significant share of the funding for their militant campaign (for a review, see Isakhan and González Zarandona 2018). Setting this within a wider context, Brear acknowledged the need for enhanced legal protection against the purchasing, possession and distribution of such objects in Britain and the USA; he thus also highlighted how this trade has still not been effectively curtailed (see now Brodie *et al.* 2022). Brear concluded that it is crucial that the destruction of cultural heritage does not overshadow the region's humanitarian disaster, but that tackling heritage crime is a necessary part of international efforts to combat the group and their political ideology.

Debating the repatriation of cultural treasures

Chaired by Alfie Brear, the third session of the conference then shifted focus to processes of complex, sensitive but significant long-term debates surrounding the repatriation of cultural treasures housed in Western museums and art galleries. Robert Yates tackled the particular controversy surrounding the Parthenon Marbles (otherwise known as the Elgin Marbles) in his presentation: 'Boris Losing His Marbles? Politics, Political Leaders and their Effect on the Process of Repatriation' (Figure 6). Yates highlighted that while there has been a sustained and growing momentum for the repatriation of the marbles, this is unlikely to translate into their restitution to Greece because of the nature of the UK political system rather than the strengths of any of the arguments made for or against such repatriation. Specifically, the limited office periods of parties and governments means long term issues, such as repatriation, are rarely addressed to any degree that results in significant outcome. Despite this, Yates outlined the success of the United Nations (UN) in considering repatriation as a central issue which required action from its member states (see now ICPRCP 2022). France, under the presidency of Emmanuel Macron 2017–), was discussed as being the only nation to have responded and repatriated artefacts to any significant degree because of this UN initiative (Adams 2018).

Figure 6: Robert Yates presenting 'Boris Losing His Marbles?'

Figure 7: Adam Andre presenting 'Who Really Cares about the Repatriation of 'Treasures''?

Yates concluded his presentation by noting that whilst France's repatriations are still limited, they have exceeded the comparably poor efforts made by Boris Johnson's UK administration (2019–). A case is thus made by Yates that the influence any European leader or political party has had on the process of repatriation, despite the efforts of the UN, has been extremely limited. Will the sustained arguments for repatriation on a larger scale continue to leave national museums behind or focus only on local and regional institutions (Hicks 2020: 234)? More broadly, is the argument for large-scale repatriation fully

Figure 8: James Raine presenting 'Romanticising the Archaeologist'

articulated beyond the academy and museums' own crisis of identity and mission (Jenkins 2016)?

Adam Andre tackled broader issues in 'Who Really Cares about the Repatriation of 'Treasures'? by debating the moral and ethical dilemmas that come with returning 'treasures' to indigenous communities (Figure 7). Andre considered how successful genomic (DNA) analyses of human remains formerly held by museums such as the Five Continents Museum in Munich and subsequently repatriated to the Yidinji community of northern Australia affirmed a lineage to directly related ancestors. Assessing the advantages of repatriation, he illustrated how the benefits of DNA analysis. In other words, the remains are far more significant to the Yidinji than to museums and nations where the human remains were being kept (Anon. 2019). Yet, Andre however explored how the repatriation of 'treasures' may not always be of such significance and that this instance of related ancestors being returned to their descendant families is not a viable argument for repatriation on all instances. Moreover, Andre further questioned whether repatriation is always the correct moral response of heritage institutions based on past colonial circumstances of acquisition; he pointed out that returning 'treasures' may bolster nationalistic discourses and result in a reduction of access by global audiences keen to learn about other cultures and their (pre)histories (see also Jenkins 2016).

Treasure and treasure-hunting in fiction

Chaired by Jacob Adams, the fourth session explored the sensationalising of treasure through TV, film and the media. James Raine presented 'Romanticising the Archaeologist: Expectations vs Reality' with a critical reflection of how 'the archaeologist' is portrayed in film (Figure 8). He evaluated how, despite garnering an interest for the discipline, Hollywood has sensationalised the role of 'the archaeologist' by twisting it to be a profession of tomb raiders in pursuit of exceptional treasures. Raine further reflected on how archaeology is portrayed through mass media and identified a failing of such outlets in communicating the wealth and quantity of finds over the archaeological processes which lead to their discovery. Raine concluded his assessment by looking forward and identified a necessary balance of realism and escapism that film and television must take in future in presenting archaeology to combat against such detrimental sensationalised narratives (see also thePipeLine 2022b; for a different perspective, see Kobiałka 2017).
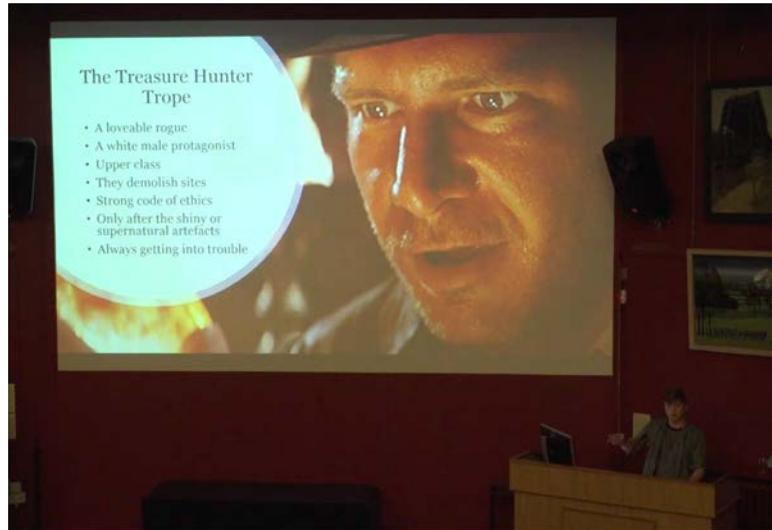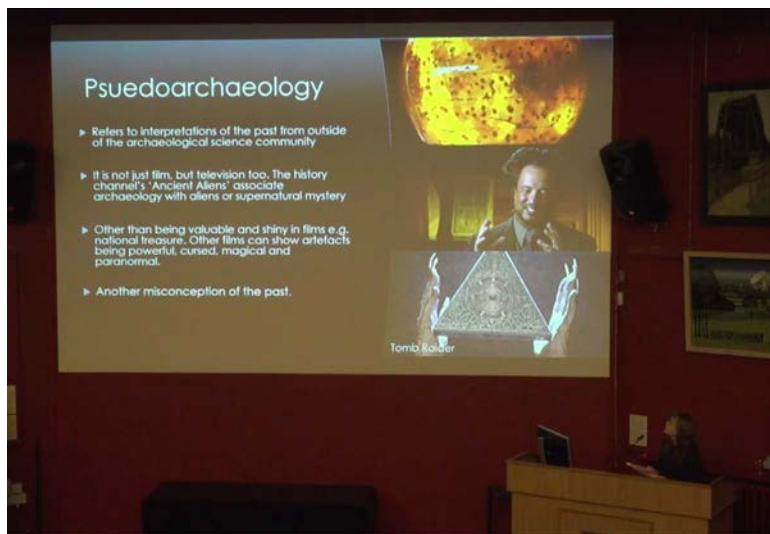
Figure 9: Kayleigh Taylor presenting 'Not All Treasure is Silver and Gold, Mate'

Figure 10: Jacob Adams presenting 'Sensationalising Treasure'

These narratives were further explored by Kayleigh Taylor in 'Not All Treasure Is Silver and Gold, Mate: The Perception of Treasure in Popular Cinema'. She explored Hollywood's depiction of the archaeologist in a critical assessment of the issues and narratives of artefacts presented as 'treasure' in film (see also Holtorf 2007; Kobiałka 2017). Taylor identified Hollywood's capitalisation of the 'treasure hunter' model for box office success as resulting in detrimental stylisations of archaeological narratives, placing adventure and value over cultural significance, thus promoting pseudoarchaeological narratives from ancient aliens to paranormal beliefs (Figure 9). Evaluating *Indiana Jones and the Kingdom of the Crystal Skull* (2008) as a case study, Taylor identified how seeking 'treasures' is pivotal to the storyline. She also considered how genuine archaeological objects are subject to similar misrepresentations through tabloid headlines incorporating sensationalised taglines to attract attention. Moreover, the commercialisation brought about by the sale of film props and replicas is discussed as detrimental to public understanding of archaeological processes and the protection of cultural heritage resources. Specifically, such representations foster the commodification of genuine archaeological objects and thus their looting and illicit trading. Whilst Taylor conceded that the portrayal of 'treasure' in film has the advantage of exposing archaeology to global audiences, she highlighted that the pseudoarchaeological narratives which are conveyed must be combated by the presentation of genuine facts about the objects that are depicted. Taylor also made the case that the significance of 'treasured' objects must form part of their narratives in order to move beyond the idea of an adventurous pursuit for monetary value only.

Treasure in the media and treasure stories

Jack Douglas chaired this fifth session, opened by Jacob Adams considering 'Sensationalising Treasure: Media Reports on UK Discoveries'. Adams evaluated how mass media has framed the monetary value of 'treasure' in their headlines to entice readers, using several examples of this, ranging from local finds through to the nationally important discovery of the Staffordshire Hoard (Fern *et al.* 2019). Additionally, these reports nearly always include sensationalised adjective descriptions of the finds in their

headlines, such as descriptions of 'astonishing', 'largest', 'biggest' and 'amazing' discoveries. Adams reflected on further issues with media representation of 'treasure', including a frequent lack of informed information about the finds' historical and archaeological significance, and an overall 'dumbing down' of narratives (Figure 10). Adams also recognised that such media attention, while pernicious, at least provokes interest in the human past to publics who might not otherwise learn about fresh discoveries and research (e.g. BBC News 2022b). Adams concluded by suggesting that archaeologists must in future seek to liaise more closely with media outlets to strike a balance between presenting engaging reports and archaeological accuracy.

Sophie Brown (who contributes a chapter in this volume) focuses further on media portrayals of treasure, specifically regarding funerary contexts in her talk, titled: "Yes. Wonderful Things': Media Portrayal of Tombs as 'Treasuries'. Evaluating how the tombs of Tutankhamun and the Prittlewell Prince in comparative terms have been presented in the media, Brown contrasted this with media representations of the artwork from the tomb of Seti I (Figure 11).

The final speaker of the session, Edward Antrobus (who also contributes a chapter to this volume) explored one aspect of the challenges of engaging publics with treasures in museum and heritage contexts: 'Audio Bling: Beyond Vision in Reporting and Displaying Archaeological Treasures' (Figure 12). Again, a developed version of his essay is included in this collection, focusing on the display of the Staffordshire Hoard (see also Greaves this volume).

Keynote speakers and discussant

The conference also welcomed the insightful contributions of Gail Boyle (senior curator of archaeology and world cultures at Bristol Museum) (Figure 13) and Adam Daubney



Figure 11: Sophie Brown presenting 'Yes. Wonderful Things'

Figure 12: Edward Antrobus presenting 'Audio Bling'

Figure 13: Gail Boyle presenting 'A National Strategy for Treasure?'

Figure 14: Adam Daubney presenting 'A Field Guide to Finding Grave Goods'

(Freelance archaeological finds specialist) (Figure 14). Their keynote presentations reflected and evaluated the concept of 'treasure' and the treasure process by identifying several challenges regional museums face when acquiring 'treasure' and the issue of why grave goods are not afforded the same protection as 'treasure' finds. Their talks were enriching and thought-provoking discussions that left the audience with much to think about regarding the future of 'treasure' and versions of these talks appear in refined and advanced form in this book as an interview (Boyle) and chapter (Daubney). Peter Reavill's closing discussion has been also extended via interview for inclusion in this collection (Figures 15).

The Twitter conference

Complementing and extending the day conference, for the first time at the University of Chester Archaeology Student Conferences we organised a Twitter session on 1 February 2020, supported by the catchy hashtag #blingarch (criticised by Broph this volume). Here were eight Twitter threads presenting further invaluable reflections on the public archaeology of treasure using the explicitly comedic hashtag #blingarch and subsequently curated as a Twitter Moment.[4] Six of these were developed (in part) to constitute chapters in this book and no further review is required (by Sophie Brown, Pieta Greaves, Caitlin Green, Peter Reavill, Aisling Tierney and Howard Williams). The two remaining presentations deserve further consideration here but, in combination, the digital dimension provided an invaluable extension of the conference event in regards to both themes and concepts.

As well as making invaluable contributions to the Grosvenor Museum conference discussion, Keith Westcott (Association of Detectorists) provided a Twitter presentation which show-cased his ongoing initiative to pioneer closer liaison between metal-detectorists and archaeologists through an educational and research institution. Westcott has proposed the creation of the Institute of Detectorists to facilitate ethical and appropirate conduct, training and a broader archaeological education for the wider metal detecting community as well as collaborative research projects between metal detectorists and archaeologists.

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4   https://twitter.com/i/moment_maker/preview/1223569822480510981; for the conference itself: https://twitter.com/i/moment_maker/preview/1223310259424518146

Westcott has liaised with the PAS and has received funding from Historic England to develop this proposal.[5]

Finally, Professor Anna Wessman (University of Bergen) reflecting on what constitutes 'treasure' in the context of archaeology in Finland (see also Wessman *et al.* 2016). She identified the media frenzy surrounding some finds of precious metal artefacts and the (unhelpful) media description of such objects as 'priceless'. The term 'treasures' is regularly applied also to shipwrecks and rare and well-preserved items. Regarding how such superlatives might be avoided, Wessman proposed a more active role by professional archaeologists and academics on social media and public outreach events to explain the archaeol
gcial information and values associated with such discoveries beyond their monetary value.

Figure 15: Peter Reavill as discussant

Archiving the event

As well as via this book, the conference has been archived online. This takes the form of two Twitter Moments and a video of the conference recorded by the University of Chester's Learning and Teaching Institute technologists (see Williams 2020a and b; for a final review of all the student conferences and their proceedings, see Williams 2022).

Part III: Introducing the book

Reflecting on these shifting and conflicting meanings, values and significances for treasure in archaeology's public engagements, interactions and manifestations, this volume emphasises how archaeological education and research cannot avoid the persistent and evocative associations of 'treasure' in socio-political discourse and popular culture. This first-ever exploration of 'the public archaeology of treasure' thus offers a host of timely themes and perspectives on the public engagement with, and popular receptions of, archaeological 'treasures' by archaeological educators and researchers as well as heritage practitioners. It includes critiques of concepts and deployments of 'treasures' by professionals and academics in contemporary society and in heritage environments.

Matching the previous two volumes stemming from the University of Chester Archaeology Student Conferences (Williams and Clarke 2020; Gleave *et al.* 2020), this book's 12 chapters comprise a mixture of formats. There are three edited interviews (Boyle, Greaves and Reavill), six peer-reviewed chapters (Brophy, Daubney, Green, Greene, Tierney and Williams) and three student essays by University of Chester students evaluated by the editors.[6] The book builds directly upon the 2020 conference, with contributions from the event's keynote speakers (Boyle and Daubney), discussant (Reavill) and two of the presentations by then-final-year students (Antrobus and Brown). Further notable student contributions to the book were provided by former undergraduate student Natasha Carr who transcribed one of the interviews. Likewise, former undergraduate and subsequently Master's student James Raine evaluated a selection of

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[5] https://detectorists.org.uk/the-institute-feasibility-study/
[6] Former undergraduates who participated in the conference, Antrobus and Brown, and former undergraduate and Master's student, and current doctoral researcher, Clarke.

the draft submissions.[7] Whilst not participating in the conference, former undergraduate and subsequently Master's student Samuel Clague joined the project as co-editor in 2021 to assist in evaluating and proof-reading the final contributions as well as co-authoring this introduction.

Rather than following the structure of the conference, the book has been arranged broadly by theme, although there exist many cross-cutting issues found throughout the volume's contents. We start with discussions of the ongoing practices and procedures, challenges and controversies surrounding metal detecting and the Portable Antiquities Scheme in England and Wales (chapters by Reavill and Clarke). These are followed by reflections on broader considerations of public perceptions of 'treasure' in the Republic of Ireland (Greene) and commercial exploitations and popular cultures of 'treasure-hunting' following a recent social media and media controversy involving Cadbury (Tierney). The book's focus then ranges across museum roles and responsibilities regarding treasure valuations and display (Boyle), before considering the potential for innovative uses of digital technology to engage and educate audiences in distinctive ways (Antrobus) and the successes and limitations of use of social media regarding 'treasure' and other material cultures (Green). A triad of chapters next tackle the ethics and public perceptions of 'treasure' specifically derived from mortuary contexts, simultaneously exploring issues relating to treasure-reporting, the illicit trade in antiquities, and the values and qualities attributed to 'treasure' in academia, the media and popular culture (chapters by Daubney, Brown and Williams). As such, these three chapters tackle further ethical and political dimensions of public archaeologies of death: the theme of the first and sixth University of Chester Archaeology Student Conferences (see also Williams *et al.* 2019; Williams 2022). Finally, the volume then tackles how archaeologists might use and misuse, challenge and subvert popular understandings of archaeological 'treasure' and 'bling' (Brophy).

An early medieval focus

Debates and discussions regarding the public archaeology of treasure cover all periods of the human past, and chapters specifically tackle themes relating to Bronze Age, Iron Age, Roman, later medieval and modern eras. Indeed, conceptions and perceptions of treasure from before the widespread adoption and working of metal is tackled by Brophy. Yet we must draw attention to the bias towards discussions of early medieval material culture throughout this volume because almost every chapter tackles early medieval artefacts, sites and monuments partly or primarily. This is not simply reflective of the passive biases in the expertise and interests of the editors. Arguably, it also reflects the specific contributions of stray-finds and discoveries perceived to be, or declared to be, treasure for the public education and appreciation of the early medieval past. Betwixt prehistory and the ancient world on the one side and the later medieval and modern eras on the other, the Early Middle Ages for Britain and Ireland (including a range of sub-categorisations in regard to chronology, geography and perceived cultural and political groupings, such as the Picts, Anglo-Saxons and Vikings) has long been constituted and perpetuated in the public imagination through the display and study of 'treasures'. These reveal the sophisticated and complex story of these islands and their far-flung connections from the materials themselves, their styles, and the significance and contexts of their use and reuse. They range from items called 'treasures' pertaining to the early Christian church to objects and collections shedding light on broader social, political, religious and economic dimensions of early medieval societies (e.g. Goldberg and Davis 2021). They derive from graves, settlements and stray-finds, but specifically precious-metal hoards have a pivotal role in grabbing the attention of the public: stories of discovery, investigation and challenging of popular misconceptions regarding the 'Dark Ages'. Crucial examples from recent decades include the Staffordshire Hoard (Fern *et al.* 2019; Fern and Butterworth 2022), the Galloway Hoard (Goldberg and Davis 2021) and the Watlington Hoard (Naylor and Williams 2017), as well as the recent

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[7] For these welcome contributions, Natasha and James are here acknowledged by crediting them as co-authors of this introduction.

controversies and criminal prosecutions relating to the aforementioned Herefordshire (Leominster) Hoard (Hoverd *et al.* 2020), while existing collections in local, regional and national museums frame the period around precious metal and stones. As already mentioned, some of the most prominent case studies of archaeology/metal detectorist responsible and constructive collaborations relate to early medieval sites and contexts (e.g. Paterson *et al.* 2014).

The popular culture references to early medieval 'treasure' is not simply a feature of the real-world. One might cite the regularity within which 'treasure' is associated with the period in fiction as pertaining to the Early Middle Ages. For example, in the *Doctor Who* episode 'Planet of the Dead' (2009), Lady Christina de Souza steals a golden chalice from a museum in London, purported to have belonged to King Aethelstan. This is but one of a series of enduring allusions to 'treasures' and sacred artefacts in museums and collections in the long-running television programme. Likewise, on the *Archaeodeath* blog, Williams has charted how items of early medieval 'treasure' have been prominently featured in reproduction items of clothing, costume and church relics in the popular television series *The Last Kingdom* (see also Nicholls and Williams 2020).[8] While, featured less prominently in the parallel popular television shows *Vikings* (2013–2020) and *Vikings: Valhalla* (2022–), which are far more fantastical, albeit still inspired by a range of archaeological and historical themes, architectures and landscapes, treasure does appear as a focus of acquisition through raiding, gift-giving, display and disposal in hoards and graves (Williams 2019; Williams and Klevnäs 2019).[9] The archaeological discovery of 'treasure' has also recently featured in the Netflix film *The Dig* (Williams this volume).

As mentioned above, the paramount significance of Anglo-Saxon archaeology is recognisable in the aforementioned comedy drama *Detectorists* with series 1 (2014) fixated with seeking out the ship-burial of an East Saxon king and series 2 (2015) on the search for, and discovery of, a late Anglo-Saxon *aestel*. In series 3, Lance reflects on the landscape as being walked upon by previous peoples including Celts, Saxons and Vikings while Andy Stone, whilst working as an archaeologist, tinkers with a Meccano Sutton Hoo helmet in his garage (series 3, episode 1). Together, the three series of the show serve to reflect on 'contested notions of Englishness during a period of increasing political polarisation' (Keighren and Norcup 2020: 15).

The video game *Assassin's Creed: Valhalla* provides us with another recent example of how early medieval archaeology manifests in popular entertainment. The game allowing us to see the early medieval British landscape populated by archaeological sites and archaeological treasures as integral to the game-play, with actual items from the British Museum inspiring costume and the choices of items available for recovery as plunder (Cowen 2021).[10] Furthermore, the 'Discovery Tour: Viking Age' free extension pack released in late 2021 allows you to explore the world of the Vikings, designed by Ubisoft with 'input from historians and archaeologists' (Ivan 2021) and in which players 'will be able to embody different Viking and Anglo-Saxon characters' to explore 'historical events and daily life' and 'view real artifacts from the collections of Discovery Tour's museum partners' including York Archaeological Trust (Reparaz 2021).

In this context, while the 'public archaeology of treasure' is a specific and important aspect in tackling the threats and challenges with the conservation and management of sites, monuments and landscapes worldwide and across the human past, and likewise it contends with public education in combating popular misconceptions and extremist appropriations of all time periods, these issues have a particular intensity and pertinence for public archaeologies for the 'Dark Ages'. Moving forward, how we reconceptualise and use 'treasure' will have a profound impact on how we conduct and critique public

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[8]   https://howardwilliamsblog.wordpress.com/category/archaeodeath-on-tv-film-and-video-games/the-last-kingdom/
[9]   https://howardwilliamsblog.wordpress.com/category/archaeodeath-on-tv-film-and-video-games/vikings/
[10]   https://twitter.com/SueBrunningBM/status/1466437639960158216; https://www.news9live.com/technology/gaming/discovery-tour-viking-age-sue-brunning-interview-132183

archaeology from portrayals of early modern 'pirate treasure' to the tombs and treasuries of 'ancient civilizations' and processes of restitution for indigenous communities. Yet, this book contends that there will be a distinctive set of challenges and opportunities for early medieval public archaeologies for the Early Middle Ages in particular (see also Williams and Clarke 2020).

Conclusion: beyond the book

This book, through the critical challenges it highlights, prompts us to reconsider how archaeologists' practices and policies, teaching and research tackle the legal and conceptual categories, social entanglements and enchantments, emotions, worths and values we afford to material culture, including items variously described as 'treasure', from the human past in our contemporary society. This field of critical investigation is not only concerned with the stories we tell about things, but how we talk about people and processes in the human past in which these assemblages were created, implicated and enmeshed. It is concerned with tackling the looting of archaeological sites and monuments as well as challenging and subverting the illicit trade in antiquities. It also extends to the practices and discourses which promote questionable and criminal activities surrounding the discovery, sale and treatment of archaeological material cultures. Likewise, 'the public archaeology of treasure' is not simply about semantics: although the pernicious commodifying vocabularies surrounding rare and precious material cultures such as 'treasure', 'treasure-hunting', 'bling' and so on are integral to the challenges archaeologist's face (see Brophy and Williams this volume). The public archaeology of treasure involves all these themes, but it also prompts us to reconsider how we categorise and implicitly value human societies and human relations in relative terms via collections of rare and precious metal things and related material cultures. The public archaeology of treasure critically explores how we implicitly and (sometimes) explicitly interpret the archaeological contexts from whence rare and precious items are derived and how they acquire meaning and value in our present.

The public archaeology of treasure thus relates to the stories we tell in today's world using these 'treasure' items, from archaeological reports to Hollywood films and video games. We advocate that the public archaeology of treasure should become a crucial theme for heritage and archaeological discourses across the globe in the next decade, prompting careful and refined re-evaluations of our theories and practices, ranging from how we regulate and liaise with amateur metal detectorists, how we engage new audiences with archaeological interpretations, how we collect, curate and display material cultures in museums, to how we talk about 'treasure' in publications and on social media. If 'treasure' has a future, in legal, cultural, national, and entangled senses of value and significance, the public archaeology of treasure must become a sustained focus of new research and public engagement.

Postscript

We began with a television dramatisation of a romanticised, almost mystical, reflection on treasure-hunting as a hobby and a means of communing with the English landscape and the human past in *Detectorists.* In contrast, we must end by reflecting on more pernicious and global dimensions to the public archaeology of treasure. Material culture from the human past has long been considered simultaneously 'cultural treasures' and symbols of ethnic and nationalistic pride and identity, and as potential 'loot' to be acquired through military expeditions and extractive economic processes to populate private collections and museum displays as well as utilised to bolster imperial, colonial and other nationalistic discourses (e.g. Hamilakis 2007; Hicks 2020). Treasure cuts both ways.

At the time of writing, attempts to decolonise museums through repatriating cultural treasures are ongoing and the focus of heated debate. For the UK, these processes regularly manifest themselves in

news headlines, most recently with Glasgow City Council museums returning 49 looted items, including 17 Benin bronzes (Harris 2022). Similarly, the decolonisation of museum collections is developing elsewhere, as with Fennoscandia; recently, the 17th-century drum of Sámi man Poala-Ánde was restored to his people in Norway from the National Museum of Denmark (Anon. 2022). Such treasures are latent and actual manifestations of resurgent connections to pre-colonial pasts in a post-colonial era.

Conversely, there are violent and criminal means by which items are being taken from their museum contexts. Drawing on a long tradition of iconoclasm and looting as mechanisms of political hegemony and manipulation of the social memories of nations and peoples in modern conflict zones (see Isakhan and González Zarandona 2018: 5), new looting of archaeological material cultures and heritage sites is unfolding in Ukraine as I write. Physical violence and destruction and looting run parallel courses in modern wars; soon after Russia's invasion of Ukraine, museums and art galleries worked hard to attempt to safeguard the 'cultural treasures' of the nation from both incidental and orchestrated damage, destruction and pillaging (Akinsha 2022). This process is now in full swing with report after report revealing that part of the ongoing impact of the war is not only its humanitarian disaster but also targeted attacks on hundreds of sites of archaeological and historic significance, including churches and museums, art galleries and even Holocaust memorials (Bassett *et al.* 2022; Presse in Paris 2022). 'Treasures' have also been specifically targeted for systematic looting in what has been described as a 'cultural genocide' in Ukraine, with artworks seized in Mariupol (Sauer 2022) and the alleged theft of around 198 precious and rare artefacts, including Scythian gold, from Melitopol as well as the kidnapping of a curator (Adams 2022; Gettleman and Chubko 2022).

These circumstances remind us of the utmost significance of our debates and discussions surrounding the public archaeology of treasure. They are not abstract and theoretical, but grounded in the realities of archaeological method and practice and the fate of cultural heritage on a global scale when exploring, managing and conserving traces of past societies from earlier prehistory to the present day. Concepts and practices, laws and guidelines surrounding material culture considered variously as 'treasure' are complex, contentious, rapidly evolving, and draw in every type of archaeologist and heritage practitioner from students and amateurs to museum professionals and academics. It also reminds of our social and ethical responsibilities to tackle the thorny subject of treasures throughout our contemporary world (see thePipeLine 2022c). Together, these issues underpin the importance of this first-ever book to the 'public archaeology of treasure'. Still, more work needs to be done to raise the bar of critical evaluation of practices and narratives concerning treasure as a critical dimension of public archaeology hitherto neglected in the 21st century.

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