

**VOLUNTEERING AND PLACE-BELONGING: THE CASE
OF HISTORICAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL INTEREST
GROUPS IN THE NATIONAL FOREST**

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Abstract

This thesis investigates volunteering and place-belonging amongst historical and environmental interest groups in The National Forest. With the main focus on the nature of environmental and local historical interest groups, the volunteers who are involved with these groups and their senses of belonging and relationships with place.

Based on a review of 59 environmental and historical interest groups, 41 interviews, seven ethnographic participations and consideration of various group documents this study investigates the composition of these environmental groups, the volunteers who choose to be involved with these groups and their senses of belonging and relationships with the changing places they are active within.

The geographical study area focuses on a specific place which has recently undergone significant landscape changes in relation to the designation of the area as The National Forest. Within The National Forest there are a number of voluntary environmental and historical interest groups operating, which have, through the nature of their interests, developed particular relationships with places.

This thesis is based within the wider context of environmental and historical interest volunteering. The groups considered are centred round often interrelated local historical and environmental interests, involving active volunteering in and around the area designated as The National Forest.

The scene is set for this research with a critical review of literature relating to volunteering, relationships with place and the development of voluntary environmental and historical interests.

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Volunteering and place-belonging: the case of historical and environmental interest groups in The National Forest

Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout history, places have been changing, whether due to natural phenomena or the actions of people. These changes in place have an impact, locally, both on the places and the people living in these places. Groups have developed with volunteers who have particular interests in the history and environment of places. This thesis is based within the wider context of environmental and historical interest volunteering. The groups being considered in this research are centred on often interrelated local historical and environmental interests, involving active volunteering in and around the area designated as The National Forest. Within The National Forest, there are a number of voluntary environmental and historical interest groups operating, which have, through the nature of their interests, developed particular relationships with this place, the history of the area and its environment, nature and landscape. These groups are made up of various volunteers each with their own particular experiences of, and relationships with, the places they volunteer within. Volunteers all have their own personal reasons for having become involved in these groups and their own particular roles and contributions. This study is also about relationships with place and focuses on a specific place which has recently undergone significant landscape changes in relation to its designation as The National Forest.

Environmental and historical interests are important in relation to place. Local history interests can be said to be important in finding our 'roots' (King and Clifford 1985) with increased interests related to the rapid speed of changes in today's lifestyles, encouraging people to turn to the past (Crang, 2000). Historical interest groups can play an important role in volunteers and others tracing their roots. Rural areas have also increasingly become associated with ideas of recuperation (Kaplan and

Kaplan, 1989; Simmons, 1993) and nostalgia (Thomas, 1996), with involvement in conservation providing opportunities for recreation and re-creation (Mabey, 1980). Environmental group participation can be about protecting and developing environmentally significant and interesting places as well as recording data about the local environment and the species within it. Therefore environmental and historical factors are closely intertwined with place. Volunteering in a particular place can be important in terms of contributions to place and the local community, for example through responsible citizenship (Matless, 1995; Selman and Parker, 1997), volunteer expertise and amateur contributions to data on the local environment (Lawrence, 2006) and history (Hoskins, 1959). There has also been recent government encouragement for people to become more involved in volunteering, for example through the 'Big Society' creating a more 'robust civil society' (Hobson, 2011). However, motivations and levels of volunteer involvement are highly varied (Crang, 1996; Bell *et al*, 2003). Additionally, active volunteering is often facilitated by a sense of belonging (Gooch, 2003) and desired image (Butler, 1998). Therefore pre-existing relationships and motivations will influence the likelihood of volunteering. Senses of place have in recent years, been discussed in terms of their complexity and fluidity, recognising that they are made up of a combination of overlapping and constantly changing factors (Murdoch and Pratt, 1997; Goodwin, 1998; Darby, 2000; Nash, 2002). As highlighted by Crouch (2010):

“Events happen and change the way we grasp the world; feel and engage it; make sense and give meaning to aspects of our lives and things” (Crouch, 2012: 6)

Indeed, places are about particular locations and networks of communication with both places and people having their own, individual ongoing stories (Massey, 2005).

The National Forest is about large-scale landscape change, regeneration and encouraging people to value and enjoy their natural environment (National Forest Company, 2008). Various research projects have been carried out on The National Forest, from the initial idea through to the scheme implementation (including: Cloke *et al*, 1996; Beaverstock *et al*, 1997; Bell and Evans, 1997; Sheail, 1997; Bell and Child, 1998). However, none of this research focused on the impact of this project in terms of the relationships between local historical and environmental interest volunteers/groups and place. Additionally, Morris and Urry (2006: 6) have suggested that there should be a more detailed examination of the linkages between physical environmental changes in The National Forest and “the reconfiguration of social networks and new forms of social connectedness”. The National Forest has a significant amount of industrial history, which has had an impact on the landscape and is one of the reasons it was chosen to be The National Forest (Sheail, 1997). The National Forest’s plans for the area include both significant tree planting (The National Forest, 2012), habitat restoration in old industrial areas (Beaverstock *et al*, 1997) and celebration of local heritage (Bell and Evans, 1997), therefore affecting both environmental and historical aspects of this place.

In light of these concerns the aim of this thesis is:

To investigate the nature of environmental and local historical interest groups, the volunteers who are involved with these groups and their senses of belonging and relationships with place. The specific area in which these issues are examined is The National Forest, designated in 1990.

The objectives of this thesis are:

- to analyse the composition, origins and activities of historical and environmental interest groups in The National Forest;
- to examine personal motivations and experiences of volunteers;
- to investigate place relations and belonging amongst volunteers and groups, including those related to The National Forest.

The way in which this study attempts to unpack these areas of interest focuses firstly on the composition and role of environmental and historical interest groups in the area, considering how they position themselves and their activities, and how their aims and activities relate to the area's environment and heritage. This is interesting in relation to other research on the development of environmental and historical interests (Beckett and Watkins, 2011), including the development of natural history (Sheail, 1976), local history (Crang, 1995), industrial history (Cossons, 1993) and involvement in local changes (Selman and Parker, 1997). The role and value of the groups and their volunteers in the development of historical and environmental interests is significant.

Secondly there is a more personal focus, looking at how and why individuals have become interested and involved with the environment and heritage of this place now known as the National Forest. This objective relates to literature on volunteering and place including relationships between 'locals' and 'incomers' (Halfacree, 1995; Fielding, 2000), the types of people who tend to become involved in volunteering (Davis Smith, 2000) and their motivations (Stebbins, 1996, Rochester *et al*, 2010). It is interesting to consider the individual volunteers in relation to whether previous connections with the area have had an effect on their voluntary involvement and the value of their volunteering.

Thirdly bringing the focus more prominently onto relationships with places in The National Forest, senses of belonging and place involvement are discussed in relation to this rapidly changing area. Relationships with place include consideration of local community (Delanty, 2010), social networks (Massey, 1996), tensions (Crouch and Matless, 1996) and collective experiences and family connections (Gooch, 2003a). It is interesting to consider relationships between environmental and historical interest groups, volunteers and place as local history and environmental interests are interrelated and a place's

environment and heritage can be considered important aspects of what makes a place, both physically and socially, the way it is.

In relation to the development of The National Forest it is also useful to consider the historic background of the area. As early as 1987, the Countryside Commission proposed the creation of a new multi-purpose forest. The Charnwood-Needwood area was chosen as the site for this multi-purpose 'National Forest' project in 1990, following a shortlisting of five locations (Cloke *et al*, 1996). Bell and Evans (1997) suggest that this site was selected because of the large tracts of derelict land, industrially damaged landscapes and former coal mine workings, whereas Sheail (1997) argues that it was chosen because it represented the most high-cost, high-return challenge. Beaverstock *et al* (1997) identified several key characteristics of the Needwood-Charnwood site at the beginning of The National Forest project including, limited countryside recreation opportunities, low levels of existing woodland and a history of industrially damaged landscape. In relation to the state of the environment in the area at that time, Leicestershire was identified as the second least wooded county in England (Bell and Child, 1998). Agricultural improvements, road building, quarrying, tree-planting and natural succession have also had an impact on the local environment, with Beaverstock *et al* (1997) stating that these factors were responsible for reducing the grasslands of Leicestershire by 20 per cent between 1969 and 1991.

As discussed by Bell and Evans (1998), in order for the Charnwood-Needwood area to secure the opportunity to become The National Forest, partnership of local authorities was crucial. Interestingly, The National Forest was initially adopted by some local authority areas, whilst barely acknowledged in other local authority literature (Beaverstock *et al*, 1997). For example, in Leicestershire the local newspaper, the Leicester Mercury, ran a vigorous campaign in support of The National Forest (Sheail 1997) and Parry (2006) suggests that this media action proved to be a significant factor in the selection of the

site to become The National Forest. The geographical area covered by The National Forest extends into the three counties of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire, six local authorities, several towns, numerous villages and various large private estates and tracts of farmland with limited public access (Bell and Evans, 1997). A number of research projects were carried out on The National Forest in the 1990s (Cloke *et al*, 1996; Beaverstock *et al* 1997; Bell and Child, 1998; Bell and Evans, 1998; Sheail 1998) which cover different aspects of The National Forest's aims and set-up, including how it proposed to regenerate the area with consideration of local characteristics.

The National Forest area has a distinctive industrial history which has shaped much of the environment and landscape. Areas designated within The National Forest include places with a long mining history and associated traditions. There is not a great deal of research on old mining areas. However it has been shown that such areas may have a strong interest in, and desire for, nostalgia:

“Living in a place that has witnessed much change, there is often a desire to go back in time and return home. Nostalgia is part of the emotional consequences of pit closures as individuals and communities reflect on the way things were as they cope with how their sense of home has changed” (Bennett, 2009: 2)

The National Forest is also an interesting area as it can be neither be classified as entirely urban or entirely rural and much of the literature relating to volunteers and relationships with place focuses on cities or deep country, rural areas. The rural-urban place has been described by Shoard (2002, cited in Macfarlane, 2011) as: “the interfacial interzone between urban and rural’ and termed an ‘Edgeland”. It has been suggested that these areas have been somewhat ignored (Farley and Symmons Roberts, cited in Macfarlane, 2011). The National Forest can also be considered an edge-land or marginal area due to the meeting of three counties in its midst. The National Forest is made up of the parts

of Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire which were once the locations for the forests of Charnwood and Needwood. Needwood was traditionally a productive, royal forest (Nicholls, 1972) and in comparison Charnwood was deemed unsuitable for cultivation and had no royal ownership (Parry, 2006). At the time of the instigation of The National Forest project this area was in a poor state, damaged by industry with minimal areas of woodland, grassland and countryside recreation (Beaverstock *et al*, 1997). Indeed, some of this industrial scarring is a result of the area containing the Midlands Coalfield which had once been an important source of employment (Cloke *et al*, 1996). Old coal workings and sites associated with the mining industry were central to plans for restoring habitats in the area (Beaverstock *et al*, 1997). In relation to this it was thought that the tree planting targets of The National Forest would have an impact on local hydrology (Rosier, 1998) as well as wider climatic implications (Evans, 1998; Wilby, 1998). Other aims of the project include the creation of recreational corridors (Evans and Jackson, 1998) and the celebration of local industrial heritage (Bell and Evans, 1997). So The National Forest project and designation of this place identity to the area seeks to improve the industrial landscapes and recreational opportunities of the area, including through the planting of trees. However, the designation of the area as The National Forest does not just indicate local improvements but implies the development of a national resource. Therefore the impact of these wider place connections will also need to be considered. The following section gives an overview of the sequence of chapters.

Summary of Chapters

Chapter 2 is a review of various literatures relevant to the study in order to set the scene and demonstrate the position and significance of this thesis. Firstly it considers literature relating to volunteers and volunteering, including who volunteers and volunteer motivations. Secondly the concept of place and relationships between place and

volunteering are discussed. Thirdly the focus is on literature which discusses the development of voluntary interests in local history and the environment, including amateur traditions. The chapter concludes by highlighting the context for the overall study in relation to the literature.

Chapter 3 considers the choice of study area and how the research was designed and implemented. This chapter reviews research methods most appropriate to the study of environmental and historical interest groups, their volunteers and their place relations in a changing landscape. The deployment of these methods is then discussed along with the issues encountered during the research process and the ways in which they were dealt with. An explanation of how the groups were selected for this study and an overview of their main characteristics is provided. Analytical approaches are explained covering initial analysis and the emergence of key themes. This chapter includes a list of the groups considered and two coding trees to show how ideas for the thesis developed.

Chapter 4: The Characteristics of Environmental and Historical Interest Groups in The National Forest is the first of the three empirical chapters and focuses on the local environmental and historical interest groups active within The National Forest area. This draws together commonalities of the groups and compares their differences. It includes consideration of group formation, composition and ethos, before going on to look at the various environmental and historical interest activities undertaken by the groups. It also examines their degree of interdependence, mechanisms of support and funding issues, methods of promotion and communication. At the end of this chapter illustrative group case studies are presented in order to provide a more detailed insight into how groups are actively involved with the local environment and heritage within the area.

Chapter 5: Environmental and Historical Interest Group Volunteers, discusses the individual volunteers involved in local history

and environmental groups in The National Forest. Themes considered include their motivations for volunteering, the importance of early experiences as catalysts for voluntary action, levels of involvement and the nature of their contribution to the volunteer groups and their environmental and historical interest. Finally, four individual volunteer stories are used as case studies to illustrate different types of volunteer experience, the inter-connections between the places and groups that they volunteer within and the different emerging themes which characterise individual volunteers.

Chapter 6: Relationships with Places: involvement and belonging

is the last of the three empirical chapters and the focus is on the place relationships of environmental and historical interest volunteers and senses of belonging. This chapter investigates how environmental and historical interest groups and their volunteers influence the places they are active within and their involvement with the place known as 'The National Forest'. Connections with physical places and social networks are considered along with involvement in decision making and changes in place. Finally, the focus is on the impact of the groups and volunteers as part of a place that is rapidly changing and has had a new identity of The National Forest bestowed upon it.

Chapter 7 is the concluding chapter, drawing together the research findings in relation to the overall aims and objectives of the study. The importance and relevance of the findings of this research focus on understandings of the environmental and historical interest groups, their volunteers and their relationships with place, including The National Forest. The chapter concludes with suggested possibilities for future research following on from this study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter sets out to examine three key areas of literature relevant to the research aims and objectives of the thesis. With this study investigating local volunteers and voluntary groups, various literatures on volunteering are considered including those which discuss the types of people who volunteer and volunteer motivations more broadly and the involvement of those considered 'locals' and 'incomers'. As this thesis focuses on volunteers in a particular changing place and the importance of place to volunteering, place is considered next with a focus on relationships between volunteers and place. Finally, with the main investigation of this thesis based on the activities and relationships of environmental and historical interest groups in a particular place, literature on the development of natural and local history interests is reviewed, including links between the two interests and their amateur traditions. Relationships between local history and environmental interests amongst the volunteers can draw on literature about the early developments of natural and heritage developments and interests and their interconnections. Reasons for volunteers' involvement with local history and environmental groups are related to wider literature on volunteer motivations. Triggers for starting volunteering are considered in relation to broader programmes, such as the development of The National Forest and Agenda 21. Next literature on place, communities and local involvement is discussed in relation to the relationships to be considered between both volunteers and groups in this study and the local places and communities they are actively involved within as well as the wider National Forest. This includes consideration of both positive relationships and tensions.

Volunteers and Volunteering

Volunteering is a complex phenomenon. It can be considered from various perspectives and has a long history in Britain. Davis Smith (1994) highlights the comments by a French visitor in the mid-nineteenth century on the prevalence of voluntary associations in Britain. He argues, however, that the roots of volunteering in Britain can be traced back to much earlier than this with a long philanthropic history linked in particular to religious houses and monasteries. He does, nonetheless, identify the sixteenth century as a key point in volunteering history with the emergence of charitable trusts and the establishment of the first charity commissioners through the 1597 Charitable Users Act. The development of voluntary associations in the seventeenth century was followed by an explosion of voluntary societies in the nineteenth century (Davis Smith, 1994). For example, the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was founded in 1824 modelled on existing pressure groups (such as the Anti-Slavery Society) and the first national organisation focusing on the protection of wildlife (now the RSPB) grew out of it: the Selborne Society for the Protection of Birds, Plants and Pleasant Places in 1885 (Sheail, 1976). Volunteering also developed through university student groups from the late nineteenth century, which helped with prisoners and the ill, and social service formed a significant part of student life from the early twentieth century (Brewis, 2011). Brewis (2011) also highlights how the development of 'Rag Fundraising' for local charities and hospitals became an important part of student culture in the 1920s and 1930s. Volunteering in Britain is still flourishing, with recent figures showing that, in 2008, 71 per cent of adults in England volunteered and the estimated value of volunteer time to the UK economy in 2010 was £18 billion (UK Parliament, 2011).

A range of research has been carried out on volunteers, their motivations, who they are and what they do. This has included research about volunteering in general and some which focuses on environmental and historical interest volunteers in particular. Drawing

from this research volunteering is first considered in broader terms followed by a more specific consideration of environmental and historical volunteering.

Who Volunteers?

Research related to those who volunteer is now considered. Firstly there is some evidence that those who live in particular types of places are more likely to volunteer than those who live in other locations. For example, Kearns (1995), in a study of participatory democracy informed by 'active citizenship', argues that the pattern of voluntary activity is regionally uneven, with places playing the main geographical role in determining residents' inclination and capacity to participate. Kearns (1995: 157-8) states that this is due to the influence of the history of places, the quality of socio-spatial environment, configuration of neighbourhoods and sense of place-attachment having an effect on shared values and positive and negative images of places, as well opportunities arising in that space-time. Additionally, Rochester *et al* (2010) highlight that volunteering is more likely amongst people who like where they live and trust their neighbours, with deprived areas having less volunteers than affluent areas.

Rochester *et al* (2010) also highlight that volunteering is more prevalent in rural areas than urban. This may be related to the idea of the English 'rural idyll'. The rural idyll is a positive image of the rural lifestyle and social representations of the rural, including aspects of the rural community and landscape (Ilbery, 1998: 3). The rural idyll is the product of emotions and processes which have shaped the rural landscape, influenced some campaigns for the protection of the 'idyllic rural character' and encouraged others to search for rural experiences (Bunce, 2003: 26). Indeed there appears to be more literature relating to volunteering in rural than in urban areas. In Halfacree's (1995: 8) research rural values highlighted by rural residents includes community spirit, awareness of nature, social stability, a slower pace of change,

handed-down wisdom, and concern relating to village-centred interests, tradition and the interests of newcomers. 'Rural community' is further described by residents as friendly and close knit, with better values and a slower pace of life (than non-rural areas), knowing everyone and having close personal community contact (Halfacree, 1995). Indeed, Walsh *et al* (2012) found that ageing rural residents, who had previously volunteered, felt that they had previously contributed to the locality and could now benefit from the reciprocal work of other current volunteers.

The image of 'the friendly rural community' has been found to attract people to move into village communities, as well as having an impact on their behaviour and attitudes once they have moved to the village (Little and Austin, 1996: 107). For example, Hughes (1997: 176) found that in the rural village: "... 'Belonging' and being part of the community meant joining in with the activities in the village". However, in contrast, Halfacree (1995: 14) found that the movement of ex-urban, middle-class incomers into new rural houses brought with it physical and social changes, which could undermine the coherence and unity of rural areas due to ex-urban middle-class people "treating the village as a dormitory" partially due to their mobility. Additionally Mayerfeld Bell (1994) found that the local working-class villagers could be suspicious of the offer of 'token control' in events arranged by 'moneyed' villagers, resulting in many avoiding participation in defiance. Despite an assumed sense of community spirit in the village, the feelings amongst locals in Hughes (1997) research was that community spirit was declining. Indeed, although rural community development lags well behind urban areas, formal staff and finance often dismiss the efforts of rural people themselves who are doing things within their own communities (Rogers, 1987: 357-8). Additionally, Crang (1995) found that active local (history group) participants, around Bristol (a more urban context) suggested that newcomers to areas tended to be more involved in activities a distance from their home, so that they were 'elsewhere dominated' and did not need their district so much. In Fielding's (2000) study many individuals involved with local events tended to be 'non locals'. Fielding

(2000) carried out his ethnographic participation research by living in a rural area of England and volunteering at a local festival, and found that the 'non locals' involved in local events had constructed their own cultural identity in the rural area in which they now lived. 'Non local' people may become involved in volunteering in order to be more involved in rural contexts, or in search of the rural idyll, as discussed above.

Rose *et al* (1997), who consider feminist geographies of environment, nature and landscape, suggest that certain spaces are limited to those who are more mobile, for example, excluding the elderly, those with disabilities and women with children, and Rochester *et al* (2010) highlight that the disabled are less likely to volunteer. However in the mid-2000s 33% of people with disabilities and life-long limiting illnesses were still likely to take part in regular informal volunteering as compared to 35% of the general population (data from the 2007/2008 Citizenship Survey). The marginalisation of certain groups from voluntary opportunities can result in members of the local community being 'othered', so that they do not feel able to participate as active citizens. They may be excluded by historical, social and physical barriers or due to the way the activity is perceived or represented. For example, historically, rural natural history pursuits were characteristic of the upper classes (Thomas, 1996) and Rogers (1987:354) suggests that in politics voluntarism is generally viewed as a middle class activity. This view, that volunteers are mainly middle class, may be linked to data which indicates that those in professional occupations are more likely to volunteer than those in non-professional occupations, as discussed by Rochester *et al* (2010). Rural women are also often associated with volunteering. For example, Little (1997) considers rural women's domestic and community roles, highlighting the perception that becoming involved in helping out with the local, rural community network through community voluntary work is a key part of 'fitting in' with local rural women, for female rural newcomers. Likewise, Hughes' (1997: 177) study of women who had moved into rural areas found that,

the organisation of local community events was very gendered, with women in the village expected to participate and contribute to village events. Indeed, from the 1950s women voluntarily invested time and money in the rural community in response to the lack of state provisions in rural area (Bouquet, in Short, 1992: 209). However, Rochester *et al* (2010: 43) highlight that despite a long-held perception and evidence to suggest women are more likely to volunteer than men, actually the difference between the genders is not so significant. They cite evidence which suggests that 39% of women and 31% of men take part in regular, informal volunteering.

Rochester *et al* (2010) compare volunteering statistics for the United Kingdom. They highlight that recent data shows an increase in participation amongst different ethnic groups (not shown in table). Volunteering data, taken from the 2007/8 Citizenship Survey (statistics on all adults, disability, age and ethnicity) and Kitchen *et al* (2006) (statistics on education) as discussed in Rochester *et al* (2010) is shown in Table 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Table showing percentage of adults involved in formal and volunteering (at least once a month unless otherwise stated) in 2007/2008

	% Involved in Formal Volunteering	% Involved in Informal Volunteering	Base
Adults in England	27	35	8036
Disabled adults and adults with long-term illnesses in England (‘regular’ volunteering)	22	-	-
Adults with a higher degree (volunteering	61	-	-

once a year)			
Adults with highest qualifications at GCSE a-c (volunteering once a year)	47	-	-
Adults with no qualification (volunteering once a year)	26		
20-24 year olds	20	36	419
75+ olds	27	24	1072
White	28	35	8036
Minority Ethnic	22	32	5493
All Asian	19	28	2745
Indian	22	28	1361
Pakistani	16	29	812
Bangladeshi	15	24	292
All Black	27	38	1672
Caribbean	27	39	808
African	26	36	818
Mixed	27	42	479
Chinese/Other	16	27	597

Rochester *et al* (2010) also state that parents with children of primary and secondary school age are actually more likely than average to volunteer, that the 'youngest' and 'oldest' are less likely to volunteer than other age groups, and the employed are more likely to volunteer than the unemployed. However, contrastingly in Halfacree's (1995: 10) research respondents suggested that those more likely to be involved in the community were actually older, lived in the village, had more spare time and were more gregarious.

Finally, understanding and enthusiasm for taking part in acts of citizenship can be encouraged by government authorities and other organisations. Kearns (1995: 155-6) describes 'active citizenship' as a citizen's inclination to participate or 'get active' in local governance. Place history, the socio-spatial environment, neighbourhood configuration and place-attachment can all influence the likelihood of individuals taking part in collective action (Kearns, 1995:156-7). For example, the Rural White Papers are seen to encourage local participation and self-help, and express the view that rural communities should see local needs and decisions as shared responsibilities between communities and government organisations (Edwards, 1998). Agenda 21 also encouraged the participation of different groups in local activities and environmental problems (Rose *et al*, 1997). Agenda 21 was adopted by over 178 Governments at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, in 1992 and is a global plan of action relating to human impacts on the environment (UN, 2009). Local Agenda 21s were widely produced across Britain and had an important role in creating opportunities for community involvement in sustainable development (Selman and Parker, 1997). Selman and Parker (1997: 180) identify 'three types of person' essential to the sustainability process. There are the 'catalytic personalities' or networkers, the 'community champions' and the 'super networkers'. Social networkers are essential for seeing projects through to completion and if they leave projects can lose momentum. Community champions will represent the voice and interests of the community in a clear and knowledgeable way. Finally, the super-networkers have the imagination, time and energy to co-ordinate and liaise across groups and mobilise resources. Between 1997 and 2010, 'New Labour' encouraged, volunteering through government policies, funding programmes, campaigns, support and infrastructure (Rochester *et al*, 2010). Additionally the recent flagship coalition government initiative programme known as the 'Big Society' and the green paper called 'Giving' promote greater volunteerism, a 'robust civil society' and discuss how to persuade British people to

volunteer more time and money (Hobson, 2011). Hobson (2011) highlights that these proposals have been met with both support and criticism, nonetheless, there is a strong government desire expressed to encourage volunteering.

Why Volunteer?

A range of motivations for volunteering have been identified in the literature examined. Motivations for volunteering and the kinds of people volunteering that occur can be classified into different types. The following four-fold typology of volunteering was prepared for the UN by Davis Smith (2000) and has been discussed by Ellis Paine *et al* (2007) and Rochester *et al* (2010):

- 1 Mutual aid or self-help
- 2 Philanthropy or service to others
- 3 Participation (in the decision making process)
- 4 Advocacy and campaigning

Ellis Paine *et al* (2007) suggest that this typology is a useful way to consider the diversity of volunteering and Rochester *et al* (2010: 25-6) consider this typology is a 'powerful tool' in understanding volunteering. However Rochester *et al* (2010) also suggest that this typology is not inclusive of all volunteering, such as leisure volunteering, and volunteers involved in sports, recreation, art and culture. Rochester *et al* (2010: 13) also discuss how Stebbens (1996) has identified three types of leisure volunteering: casual (e.g. selling tickets for an event), project based (such as participation in a community event) and serious (the pursuit of a hobby or specialist (non-work career). Motivations for serious leisure are generally intrinsic, driven by enthusiasm specific involvement, offering rewards that cannot be found through employment and as a way of expressing personality (Rochester *et al*, 2010). Davis Smith's (2000) typology gives an indication of what motivates volunteers; however such a typology does not clearly lead to

consideration of all the potential motivations of volunteering. For example, Rochester *et al* (2010) discuss the personal benefits of volunteering, including volunteers' skills development and the gaining of new knowledge and Ellis Paine *et al* (2007) highlights social aspects and health benefits of volunteering. Additionally, volunteers are not necessarily driven by one particular motivation and motivations can be complex and overlapping and may develop over time.

Rochester *et al* (2010) suggest that, in current society, the expectation of social and individual voluntary contributions and the prominence of volunteering in public policy has never been greater. They have also produced a summarised typology of different volunteering activities (Rochester *et al*, 2010: 27-29). I have considered these types of activity in relation to the categories suggested by Davis Smith (2000) above, and have organised them into a table to reflect this (see Figure 2.2).

Figure 2.2: Table of Volunteer Typology and Activities

<p>Mutual aid or self-help:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community activity (bringing in resources for the community) • Community peace keeping (maintaining order) • Personal assistance (to friends, neighbours e.tc.) • Children and Youth (e.g. setting up or managing programmes to manage problems) • Religious volunteering (e.g. helping to organise a special event) • Education (e.g. setting up or managing and educational institution) • Health care (e.g. addressing health issues) • Data collection (e.g. collecting, observing, researching, consulting, public data information) • Promotion of knowledge (e.g. disseminating knowledge or professional skills) • Promotion of commerce • Law and legal services (e.g. promoting general 	<p>Philanthropy or service to others:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emergency response (to natural disasters) • Social assistance (to people in need) • Personal assistance (to friends, neighbours etc.) • Education (e.g. teaching or training others) • Children and youth (e.g. taking care of children) • Health care (e.g. providing care or organs) • Recreation (e.g. taking part in a recreational event which has been organised to raise funds, save a public cause etc. rather than purely for personal enjoyment)
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<p>understanding of the law)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Culture (e.g. helping to plan or implement a cultural event for public entertainment) • Recreation (helping to plan or implement a recreational event for public entertainment) 	
<p>Participation (in the decision making process):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights advocacy and politics (e.g. encouraging people to advance their political interests/participate in direct action) • Economic justice (helping people to protect or advance their economic interests) 	<p>Advocacy and campaigning:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Human rights advocacy and politics (encouraging people to advance their political interests/participate in direct action) • Economic justice (helping people to protect or advance their economic interests) • Religious volunteering (e.g. promoting religious faith or values) • Environment (e.g. campaigning against threats)

What is clear from this is that even when considering Rochester *et al* (2010)'s more detailed typology it is not always clear what motivates individuals to take part in particular forms of volunteering. Even in considering these types of volunteering in very simple terms (as above), some types of volunteering from Rochester *et al* (2010)'s list can clearly be placed under more than one of Davis Smith's (2000) volunteering

types. This again indicates the complexity and likelihood of there being more than one clear-cut motivation for the volunteering.

Looking at motivations without directly linking them to any specific types of volunteering, Rochester *et al* (2010) suggest that people are motivated to act in order to address a need, and consider Clary *et al*'s (1996: 486) six categories of motivation in relation to this:

1. Values (expressing values around altruism/concern for others)
2. Understanding (for new learning experiences, to practise or develop skills that might otherwise be un-used)
3. Career (gaining career related experiences, skills or other opportunities)
4. Social (to be with friends, for social rewards or to avoid social disapproval)
5. Protective (to escape negative feelings and guilt about being more fortunate than others)
6. Enhancement (growing and enhancing self-esteem)

The first of these motivations, 'values' is perhaps the most similar to Davis Smith's (2000) 'philanthropy or service to others' type of volunteering, with some similarities to 'mutual aid or self-help'. 'Mutual aid or self-help' volunteering also has some similarities to 'understanding' with opportunities for learning and development. Indeed, Ellis Paine *et al* (2007) highlights that the National Centre for Volunteering found that volunteering brings with it a range of benefits, including empowerment, the development of community spirit, and the retention of identity. Additionally, in relation to 'career' motivations Ellis Paine *et al* (2007) found that volunteering had had a significant positive influence on skills development and employability. In relation to 'social' motivations Ellis Paine *et al* (2007) also highlights that the National Survey of Volunteering (2007) found that making friends and meeting people were an important part of the volunteering experience for over three-quarters of volunteers. 'Enhancement' motivations can be

identified in Ellis Paine *et al*'s (2007) work in which he highlights that volunteering can help develop self-confidence, self-esteem and independence, and that:

“Within the UK, people who live in areas with higher levels of informal voluntary activity report better overall life satisfaction and happiness, and they often identify themselves as very satisfied with their lives” (Ellis Paine *et al*, 2007: 23)

Rochester *et al* (2012: 122) also suggest that the motivations behind volunteering can be considered in relation to the basic psychological needs of:

- Understanding the world through acquiring knowledge
- Acting upon and expressing values
- Protecting the self

Yet, they also highlight that, sociologically, motivations are the way in which volunteers make sense of their own volunteering, and there may be an infinite number of individual needs which explain volunteers' involvement (Rochester *et al*, 2010: 124).

Further considering 'self- help and mutual aid' volunteering as referred to in Davis Smith's (2000) typology, Selman and Parker (1997) suggest that active local residents may see their voluntary involvement as a social duty or responsibility. They also suggest that active citizens have a greater sense of responsibility and duty, which can include volunteering. Indeed, Rogers (1987) discusses how motivations behind voluntary involvement may come from a need to offer alternative services and altruistic feelings of pride and pleasure. He investigates voluntarism and self-help involving social and community aspects of the lives of rural dwellers in the English countryside and suggests that such activities provide:

“... Services to people which they want, often responding with speed and with a minimum of bureaucracy” (Rogers, 1987: 354)

He also proposes that this type of volunteering represents the aspirations and needs of individuals and local groups. Ellis Paine *et al* (2007) found that volunteers were motivated by collective action and empowerment as a means of social inclusion and to increase their social and political involvement, which can include the development of opportunities for minority and excluded groups to participate. However, motivations for volunteering are not always about community development and wider community benefits. Indeed Rochester *et al* (2010) suggest that volunteers involved in 'serious leisure' or 'leisure volunteering', which they describe as volunteering linked to leisure, culture or hobby interests, are more motivated by personal or intrinsic interests. Hustinx and Lammertyn (2003) also suggest that:

"Nowadays, willingness to participate in volunteering seems to be more dependent on personal interests and needs than on service ethic and a sense of obligation to the community. Motivated by a search for self-realization, volunteers demand great freedom of choice and clearly limited assignments with tangible outcomes. Volunteer activities have to be spectacular and entertaining to keep volunteers involved" (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003: 168)

Indeed, Carlo *et al* (2005) found that although extrovert individuals are keen to respond to the needs of others they are also more likely to be motivated towards volunteering as a means of personal social stimulation. So volunteering may be driven by personal interests and used as a ways of meeting personal, however at the same time volunteering can still be about responding to the needs of others.

In relation to volunteering to participate in decision making, Goodwin (1998) looks at local participation in policy making and the role of the individual. He suggests that the possibility of strategic action by 'ordinary people' may create an arena for negotiation and reinterpretation. However, he discusses how there is an assumption

that local participation boosts public support and highlights that participation is not uncontested. Indeed, from the 1990s Local Agenda 21 (discussed earlier) developed an emphasis on the ‘pursuit of ‘local governance and sustainability’’, reflecting on the involvement and impact of local stakeholders and requiring responses and participation from the general public in the movement towards sustainable communities. Rose *et al* (1997) highlight how Agenda 21 has encouraged the participation of different groups in local activities. Indeed, when advocacy and campaigning are considered, volunteering often allows those who previously felt powerless, to become empowered and involved in change, for example through changing attitudes and knowing where to get advice, help and funding (Gittins, 1993). So, local governance that takes account of the politics of locality, new shared interests, social interaction and place-attachment can be generated (Kearns, 1995). Kearns (1995) also suggests that active citizenship and local governance provide opportunities to consider ‘place-uniqueness’. Following on from this, the next section considers relationships with place and in particular the significance of place in relation to volunteering.

Place

This thesis is about voluntary groups carrying out environmental and historical interest activities in various places throughout The National Forest, including contrasting groups volunteering in different places. However, place is not just about what Cresswell (2004) refers to as the ‘initially obvious’ and ‘common-sense’. Place is a complicated concept and can be considered through individual places, their locations and boundaries and in the deeper sense of meanings and practices (Cresswell, 2004: 50). Cresswell highlights how space, landscape and place are interrelated and the definitions of these terms are contested. Indeed, place can have its own unique and persuasive power involving both the physical world, practices which mark power relations between social groups and the process of meaning production (Cresswell, 2004:

122) as well as being a way of understanding the world through both the past and links to other places (Cresswell, 2004: 79). Concepts of place are now considered further, both directly in relation to volunteering, and more broadly.

Throughout history place and places have been defined in different ways. Early place names used in England were defined by locality and social hierarchy, with regional names coming from diverse landscapes. From the eleventh century lordly family names were added and in the eighteenth century names were adopted from the nearest estate or to celebrate a local founder or industry (Clifford and King, 2006).

Settlements close together may also have shared identities and commonalities. In earlier research Beresford (1985) suggests that sub-regions may encompass a number of parishes, so that settlement character may be drawn from that of the neighbourhood. Additionally, Kearns (1995) highlights that, places are an outcome of local government processes, which can improve local physical and social environments, generating new shared interests, and enhance social interaction and place-attachment. Indeed, one idea about place is that local senses of identity can be sought, through shared local culture and history, such as in coal mining areas – places defined by occupation. In relation to the industrial coalfield areas, Crang (1998) states:

“Looking to the coal fields of the UK, we find these most ‘industrial’ of communities scattered amid ‘rural’ counties – forming a landscape of stark contrasts. The communities themselves developed a deep connection with their work. People did not just happen to work in a mine – they were miners. The job implied a whole culture and way of life... in such communities the strength of common bonds, through shared experiences and shared work and depending on the mine, could build extremely strong links between people – a distinctive ethos” (Crang, 1998: 143)

Bell (2007) also found that miners in Leicestershire are recorded to have lived in a tight-knit community, where they worked and relaxed together, taking part in competitions such as growing vegetables and breeding racing pigeons.

In contrast, social networks and communities can also be considered in relation to defining place. For example, Massey (1996) discusses how social networks and social communities can exist without a single sense of place, through established networks, across distance and time-spaces, linking in with ideas of a global sense of place. Indeed, identity may be made up of these positions in their various spaces:

“The individual is mapped as a subject through practises of the body and subjectivity... Space then appears to provide a self-grounding reality for identity” (Pile and Thrift, 1995: 48)

In relation to this, Massey (2005) also highlights that, whilst ‘groundedness’ is linked to specific locations, spaces and places, it will also be altered in meaning and physicality through networks of communication. This can result in encounters across spaces and cultures contributing to the identity of local places. Indeed, as discussed by Nash (2002):

“The well-known distinction between grounded ‘roots’ and ‘routes’ of travel as metaphors for understanding culture and identity marks a critical shift away from these ideas of cultural origins and rootedness to movement, cultural hybridity, and fluid identities” (Nash, 2002: 32)

Massey (1996) has suggested that social boundaries are created through linkages with the ‘outside’ and understanding of sense of place can only be constructed by linking to places beyond. Additionally, Massey (2005) argues:

“... You can never simply ‘go back’, to home or to anywhere else. When you get ‘there’ the place will have moved on just as you yourself will have changed. And this of course is the point. For to open up ‘space’ to this kind of imagination means thinking time and space as mutually imbricated and thinking both of them as the product of interrelations. You can’t go back in space-time. To think that is to deprive others of their ongoing independent stories” (Massey, 2005: 125)

So, people create their own sense, or more accurately, senses of place through connections with both physical locations (landscapes, cultures and histories), and social communities and networks. Indeed, space can be considered as a voyage of discovery, with space and time interconnected to the notion of place (Massey, 2005: 1-6). Additionally, as highlighted by Jones (2009) despite globalisation resulting in greater global uniformity, people are actively seeking to maintain their local cultures and heritages. Indeed, we may be drawn to look at the character and cultures of place, to rediscover a means of self-identification. The fickle trends of today’s throwaway society are often reflected in the search for new ways to express our identity through what we wear, what we eat and the places we visit as we are no-longer satisfied with standard products (Caalders, Dietvorst *et al*, 2000). Hence individuals may use their involvement in certain spaces or activities to create images of their self-identity.

Place can also be considered in relation to the community and the identity of the community who live there. Indeed, Clark *et al* (2000) highlight that some evidence suggests certain localities are better able to express a coherent identity than others. Additionally local communities may set out on quests to develop a certain identity for their area, which can lead to differences in the development of places (Clark *et al*, 2000). These geographical variations of place identity may also be due to varied representation and involvement within and surrounding those places. Modern discourses of community are often dominated by loss and decline, however Delanty (2010: 9) highlights that the other

side of this is realisation of community and 'recovery of what has been lost'. Delanty (2010) also highlights that community is about, both particular social phenomenon (e.g. collective identities), and longing for community:

"Communication communities are not shaped only by relations between insiders and outsiders, but by expansion in the community of reference and the attempt to make belonging a real possibility" (Delanty, 2010:102)

Therefore relationships between community and place may be influenced, not only by the landscape and changes in landscape and environment of the area, but also by the history of the area, which will have often influenced both the local environment and culture. The relationships between community and place are now discussed further in the section on volunteering, motivations and place.

Volunteering, Motivations and Place

Volunteering can provide an opportunity to participate in local decision making processes, and Buchecker *et al* (2003) consider the importance of local residents having increased responsibility for local living space. Considering the shaping of the landscape and local landscape development, they highlight that direct, local participation satisfies a need for identification and integration, encourages local leisure involving the local landscape and raises a sense of responsibility amongst residents. Buchecker *et al* (2003) investigate sustainable landscape development in rural Switzerland, focusing on what prevents local residents from participating in the processes that shape their landscape and how could they be encouraged to participate. They found that the landscape was seen to express the characteristics of the local society enabling social and cultural integration. However as both changed, they needed to 'co-evolve' through direct participation of residents in order to satisfy the residents' needs. Otherwise residents

could become alienated and withdrawn from their everyday landscape and lose a sense of social belonging (Buchecker *et al*, 2003: 42-44). Therefore participation in decision making processes (which could be through volunteering) may help to maintain relationships and integration with place. Ellis Paine *et al* (2007: 14) also suggest that there is a relationship between positive neighbourhood experiences, shared values and levels of volunteering.

In relation to earlier points about the importance of relationships with place as a motivator for volunteering, Gooch (2003a: 165) highlights how place identity can be developed over time through collective experiences and through the development of shared values, beliefs and interests of volunteers involved in catchment-based environmental groups. Her study also revealed that “families who had lived in the same area for several generations had formed inordinately strong connections to particular land”, which was often related to the building of local knowledge. Lawrence (2006) likewise discusses how, in the case of Voluntary Biological Monitoring (VBM), voluntary involvement can help develop a relationship with place, through the growing relationship between the volunteers and space that develops through the act of data collecting. She later suggests that phenology has a particular role in public understanding of climate change, not only in relation to data collection, but through a more deeply integrated connection between observation and meaning with the act of data collecting providing the basis for a growing relationship between person and place (Lawrence, 2009: 174). Lawrence (2009) suggests that this relationship with place is both developed through the measurable, public activity of data collection and the invisible, personal experience. Therefore, relationships with place can also be developed through volunteering as well as being a motivator for volunteering.

Gooch (2003a: 7) suggests that local knowledge and other sources of information also can be used to develop ‘natural resource management goals’ and found that through catchment volunteering, groups and

individuals developed a deeper understanding of their place within a landscape, and were more able to live within ecologically sustainable limits. Lawrence (2006) found that a layperson's values can change through their structured observation and interpretation of nature, for example some volunteers were empowered by their experience and developed biological careers. Crouch (2010) has researched (community) gardening. In this case, participants were involved in the very specific places or locations of the community gardens. Crouch suggests that some of the seemingly simple, apparently uneventful things individuals are involved with result in those individuals feeling differently about themselves, their lives, people, places, and the things they value. Indeed, Crouch (2010: 67) suggests that "What is familiarly termed 'experience' is intertwined with 'being' and 'becoming'". Goodwin (1998: 485-6) considers nature conservation in Kent, local narratives, local people's relationships with organisations and participatory frameworks, and the ability of participatory frameworks to respond to new areas of concern and wider communities of interest. He suggests that duty of care for the local environment can be prompted through participation and a powerful unifying force for conservation is having a sense of local stewardship (Goodwin, 1998: 493). Additionally Hernandez *et al* (2010) recently carried out a Spanish study to analyse relationships between place identity, place attachment and environmental attitudes and personal and social norms that explain the likelihood of illegal behaviours against the environment. In agreement with their earlier work, they found that place identity and place attachment are significantly related to behaviours relating to the environment (Hernandez *et al*, 2010). Therefore, active participation and relationships with the environment can influence wider actions and behaviours which may initially not be seen as related.

Involvement with place can, however, also result in tensions. In Crouch and Matless' (1996) study of parish map production, they found that the emphasis on shared community could be put under strain by different claims being made to what they term geographical collectives (places)

and tensions around sense of place, with many different individuals and groups co-habiting places. For example, in one case map makers were unwilling to include a very visible public building. Placing part of the village “out of cartographic sight, the map makers undercut their desired holistic vision of place and community”. Another focus included gravel workings, widening the sense of what may be given aesthetic value and finding ‘a valued beauty in humdrum everyday diversity’ (Crouch and Matless, 1996: 250). Another example of this is found in the work of Bonaiuto *et al* (2002) who argue that:

“Large-scale environmental transformations, like the institution of natural protected areas, can affect people’s identity and affective relations with places because of the different and often conflicting decision-making levels involved, and because of the strong group and “territorial” implications of such decision making processes” (Bonaiuto *et al*, 2002: 5)

Such changes may result in unsettled feelings of disturbance and loss of identity, as well as linking current relationships and feelings about place, with the history of the place. Smith (1993) also considers tensions in relation to place and community activity. Her 1993 ethnographic study examines collective action and crowd behaviour and considers ‘the street’ as a cultural place focusing on the Peebles Beltrane Festival in the Scottish Borders. This celebration of local tradition, local culture, and carnivalesque games and competition links the past, or history, of this place to models for the future. Smith (1993) proposes that the Beltrane is a vehicle for reproducing ideas and protecting against perceived outside challenges, arguing that this local participation event symbolises the resistance in this place to English politics in Scottish affairs. It also protests against the encroachment of middle class ‘high’ cultural values and expresses the distinctiveness of the Borders within Scotland and the autonomy of Scotland within the UK. Therefore there may be tensions between different participants active in the same place. However local people may also come together

to support and express shared, local cultural values against the contrasting the options of those living outside the area.

Like Smith (1993), Crang (1995: 3) considers 'popular memory' and how past places are, produced and reproduced, through society. He discusses a growing and changing public concern over the role of the past in contemporary Britain and, how 'ordinary people' come to understand the past through 'interactional spaces'. Crang (1995: 166) highlights how much of the history of an area can be removed in the name of restoring and commemorating it and found that several history group members in his Bristol case study felt that the changes in their local area were so immense it was virtually impossible to adequately communicate what it had been like. Crouch and Parker (2003) also highlight how history and heritage can be used to shatter dominant conceptions and standard models of action and place. They examine how a radical group portrayed place and practices in Surrey, by associating more alternative, neglected and marginalized versions of history with more mainstream aspects in order to further their interests. Crouch and Parker (2003) suggest that memory is re-worked through interactions with place and the refiguring of versions of heritage through performance. Therefore the way a particular place or landscape is represented is not just necessarily just observed but can be changed. A similar change in place representation has occurred at Hadrian's Wall. Witcher *et al* (2010: 119) investigated the archaeologies of landscape focusing on Hadrian's Wall. They suggest that through the repetition of images highlighting the Wall merged into the surrounding 'natural' landscape, perceptions relating the original function and values of the Wall (e.g. defence, civilization vs. barbarity) have been changed. Therefore, active participation in and around places may be used to change the way those places are seen by the wider population, an aspect which may be considered in relation to campaigning-oriented voluntary activity.

Having positive, shared, voluntary experiences in a particular place can also be considered in relation to mutual aid and self-help motivations. Goodwin's (1998) study investigates volunteers in Kent involved in organised nature conservation participatory programmes. In this case volunteers saw their participation in relation to realising self-regulating targets and goals through local achievements, senses of belonging, improvements to the local environment and development of 'community spirit' (Goodwin, 1998: 490). In addition, Crouch and Matless (1996: 248), who investigated voluntary involvement in local parish map projects, suggest that the creation of these maps could be used to bring places together and open up discussions about their future. This project also included volunteers discussing and mapping aspects of both their local environment and local history.

However, volunteering is not always focused on local places and communities. Some volunteers are more focused on relationships with the information they gather or species they work with. For example, Lawrence's (2010: 257 & 262) work on environmental volunteers involved in biological monitoring considers volunteers in the UK and their attachment to their data. She suggests that these volunteers are involved due to their attachment to particular species, and good will. However, initial public interests in the local environment and heritage have come about for a variety of reasons and the development of these interests shall be considered next.

Voluntary Interests in Local History and the Environment

Literature on the developments of historical and environmental interests can show how the history of, and interests in, these subjects are often interconnected. For example the Victoria County Histories considered county histories including their natural history. The Victoria County Histories were founded in 1899 and Beckett (2007) suggests that the traditional study of county and parish was not only due to them being manageable units, but also because they represented the structure in

which most people lived. The Victoria County History (VCH) was established as a 'National Survey' of the history of English counties and natural history was seen to be a key component of this with the first volume also including the subjects of geology and archaeology (Beckett and Watkins, 2011). Beckett and Watkins (2011) examine the reasons for natural history being given such a prominence, considering the counties of Herefordshire and Nottinghamshire in particular. They highlight that:

"Until relatively recent times, the study of natural history was indistinguishable from other local studies such as antiquarian and archaeological investigation" (Beckett and Watkins, 2011: 60-61)

They also discuss how the interests and activities of many county archaeological and antiquarian societies set up during the nineteenth century included natural history and architectural history even though this was not always apparent in the organisation's title (Beckett and Watkins, 2011). Winter (1996: 176) also highlights that concern for England's physical environment is related to the role of landscape in English culture and traditions with the power and influence of landowners and early industrialisation leading to a nostalgia for 'rural roots'. He also suggests that the heritage explosion towards the end of the twentieth century is a direct result of the environmental preservation of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

Again in the twentieth century, further connections between environmental and historical interests can again be seen. For example Samuel (1994: 171) refers to relationships between history and natural history developments, suggesting that nature trails of the 1960s might have been a predecessor to heritage trails. He also highlights that during the same time conservation activities were focused on 'well-known historic landmarks' and discusses how many long-distance countryside walks follow pre-historic trade routes and certain environmental features are considered heritage features or of historical

value (Samuel, 1994: 145). Additionally, in the 1960s and 1970s social history and the topic 'Hedges and Local History' became popular study amongst primary schools opening up questions about land use (Samuel, 1994). Rackham (1994) likewise suggests that landscape history is related to conservation, highlighting three major means of connection:

"History is part of the understanding of how landscapes work and how to maintain them... History helps to isolate the un-conservable: to separate features that are inherently short lived and the result of some passing land-use fashion... from those with more stability and permanent value. A historical dimension is needed for the most critical and least recognised aspect of conservation: how to identify the abnormal" (Rackham, 2004: 7)

Therefore it can be argued that environmental and historical developments are intertwined and so it may be difficult to consider one with considering elements of the other. For example, in the recent development of The National Forest it is suggested that local people are proud of their new environmental surroundings and at the same time keen to share and find out more about the history of the place they live in (Parry, 2006: 6). Thus in considering those involved with the local environment or local heritage in The National Forest there is likely to be some overlap of interests.

The Amateur Tradition

Both amateurs and professionals can be found in the fields of history and natural history. For example, natural history collections and classifications became a popular pursuit and social activity of the middle classes from the late eighteenth century, with the development of professional ecology developing from these roots in natural history (Winter, 1996). In the nineteenth century the Victoria County History brought together specialist professionals with years of experiences with

a range of local and national history and natural history knowledge and interests as well as involvement in related local and national interest groups (Beckett and Watkins, 2011). Recently there has been an increased interest in the relationships between amateurs and experts which has significant implications for the understanding of volunteering. For example, Beckett and Watkins (2011: 83) highlight that amateur interests have been greatly strengthened by professional ecologists, historians and writers who generated interest in the history of plants and animals. Lawrence (2006) likewise discusses how there has been a rich British amateur tradition of producing data about flora and fauna since the eighteenth century linked to increased leisure time and curiosity about nature. Indeed, amateurs have played a key role in local history:

“The amateur... has made a large contribution to English local history in the past, and there is still plenty of room for him (or her) in this vast and still largely unexplored field... The professional historian only entered this field when The Victoria History of the Counties of England was founded in the year 1899... The professional historian plays a very small part... And this must always be so from the nature of the subject. There will be plenty of room for the amateur for generations to come” (Hoskins, 1959: 3)

Furthermore amateurs also have a key role in contributions to come. For example, Falconer (2000) suggests that with an emphasis on conservation-led regeneration and integrated management of landscapes there are still plenty of industrial archaeological recordings to be made in the new millennium and Ellis and Waterton (2004) suggest that ‘expertise’ is one of the elements which appear to have held amateurs and professionals together.

There can be various advantages to amateurs and professionals working together. Ellis and Waterton (2005) suggest volunteers bring with them the advantages of being scattered across the country, having unique access to local sites and nature, willingly and freely donating

knowledge to professional communities and creating vital connections between amateur and professional communities. Indeed, by the twenty-first century there were over 60,000 volunteers as well as various other organisation, centres and project involved in surveying the more easily recognisable species (Lawrence, 2010). In some cases, professional conservationists have been observed designing new networks to involve amateur naturalists more closely with Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) planning (Ellis and Waterton, 2005). Indeed, although activities may be unseen, the involvement of volunteers is often of key importance:

“The role of volunteer naturalists is usually central but invisible... although surveys are carried out by consultants volunteer naturalists are often the main contributors of records...” (Ellis and Waterton, 2004: 98)

However, as Goodwin (1998) highlights, tensions may arise between the individual amateurs participating in tasks defined by professionals. Geoghegan (2009) suggests that, in the case of historical data, some conflict and prejudice remains between so-called amateurs (enthusiasts) and professionals, with some enthusiasts suggesting a much-loved pastime has been ‘hijacked’ by academia and that professionals do not appreciate what they do. Indeed, volunteers may be very committed and attached to their voluntary work. For example, in the case of volunteers involved in biological monitoring, Lawrence (2010) found that many have a strong attachment to their data and can perceive both threats and opportunities when organisations become involved in managing new data. Additionally, naturalists may present knowledge in different ways to professionals, which means some information may be discarded, for example, due to poor quality, scientific rigour or inappropriate demands for payment (Ellis and Waterton, 2004). Expertise may also cast new participants in or out of new knowledge networks (Ellis and Waterton, 2004).

Traditionally both environmental and historical interests were also historically gendered. During some earlier phases of natural history studies, it was not considered appropriate for women to become involved in countryside pursuits. For example, in the late 1780s women were patronised by natural history and natural science groups and, despite their achievements in botany, they were looked upon as purely decorative and fragile, and considered to wear clothing inappropriate to groups' activities (Allen, 1994). Additionally even botany was seen as an unsuitable activity for young ladies due to the close scrutiny involved of the 'private parts' of flowers (Thomas, 1983: 65-66). However, many middle class women who had comparatively more leisure time than other women were significantly involved with several publications on botany by the end of the eighteenth century (Thomas, 1983: 282). In the case of historical interest groups, it also appears that the industrial archaeology groups of the 1970s were generally considered as mainly the preserve of men:

"We do have such happy amateurs already... there may be qualified historians among them, but most of them are men of many trades who get together, not merely to toss a glass and eat a snack, but to match minds in the fascinating historical quest of which they are all lovers" (Tilden, 1977: 101)

In the case of the Victoria Country Histories, the Herefordshire writers included one woman (Beckett and Watkins, 2011).

Therefore both environmental and historical interest groups have at some point in the past marginalised the involvement of women. As well as clear links between the development of natural history and local history it is clear that they both have a strong association with amateur, voluntary activity and have at some point been dominated by male participants.

Local and Industrial History

In the 1940s and 1950s, adult education was a starting point for the development of 'abstract' historical concepts, however initially students were denied access to degree studies (Trinder, 2000) and Beckett (2007) suggests that local history was largely ignored in the nineteenth century. However, in 1955 Hoskins wrote the book 'The Making of the English Landscape', which is a pioneering book which, at the time, claimed to be the only book to deal with the historical evolution of the English landscape as we know it. Hoskins was also the catalyst for the first university department devoted to Local History being set up in the University of Leicester in 1948 and 'The Making of the English Landscape' was said to be responsible for this new field in English history being cultivated (Hoskins, 1955). 'The Making of the English Landscape' considers the history of English landscapes from the pre-roman landscape through English settlements, medieval England, the black death, Tudor and Georgian England, and enclosure through to industrial revolution, the development of roads, canals and railways, the development of towns and the current landscape of the 1950s. The rate of environmental change in the 1960s and 1970s also resulted in the development of two further sub-disciplines: landscape archaeology and industrial archaeology. This was followed by the development of historical ecology driven by concerns about the threats to natural heritage (Sheail, 2002) again linking environmental and historical interests. By the late 20th century hundreds of local history groups existed (Crang, 1995).

A growing public awareness of the industrial past in Britain came about in the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, both industrialisation and the industrial archaeology movement began in Britain. Following industrialisation from the eighteenth century, by the twentieth the development of new technologies had led to increasing numbers of obsolete artefacts, often iconic of Britain's nineteenth century peak of industrial power. This process led to the emergence of interest in industrial archaeology in

Britain (Buchanan, 2000) and steam traction rally events led by working farmers in the 1950s (Samuel, 1994). In the 1960s there was a rapid expansion of interest in preserving industrial sites, buildings and their contents in situ, and occasionally in some form of operation (Cossons, 1993). Trinder (2000) suggests that the development of the industrial archaeology movement was also “Part of a process of coming to terms with a disturbing past” (Trinder, 2000: 39). Additionally, in the 1960s ‘heritage walks’ or ‘history trails’ began to be developed (Samuel, 1994). Voluntary effort peaked in the late 1960s, when five principal open-air museums were founded: the Iron Bridge Gorge Museum in Shropshire (1967), the Weald and Downland Museum near Chichester (1971), the Avoncroft Museum of Buildings near Birmingham (1967), the Black Country Museum in Dudley (1975) and the North of England Open Air Museum in County Durham (1972) (Trinder, 2000). However, museums do not just tell stories, the existence of the museums themselves have stories to tell, for example the Iron Bridge Gorge Museum was formed in order to provide the new town with a sense of identity formed around the areas historical traditions in steel and iron (Hewison, 1987).

In 1963, the Council for British Archaeology facilitated a survey of the nature and location of industrial monuments. However as discussed by Falconer (2000), the traditional archaeology societies did not, at the time, seem to have the expertise or interest to assist in the survey. However by 1979, a number of local industrial archaeology societies had been founded and the national organisation, the Association of Industrial Archaeology (AIA) was by this time fully fledged following its initial establishment in 1968 (Buchanan, 2000). Additionally, in 1977, the Tourist Board began promoting heritage through its publication, ‘Heritage Monitor’ (Samuel, 1994), highlighting that:

“Open air museums which preserve redundant industrial buildings are becoming increasingly popular... Mine works and historic ships are also attracting large numbers of visitors” (Cited in: Samuel, 1994)

It is only since the 1980s, that industrial recording has become a mainstream interest (Falconer, 2000) however despite this the core of industrial history professionals is still minimal in relation to the two-thousand plus archaeologists in the United Kingdom (Cossons, 2000).

Local history interests can also be considered in relation to identity and roots. For example, Hewison (1987) suggests that:

“You don’t know where you are unless you know where you have been...” (Hewison, 1987: 10)

Likewise King and Clifford (1985: 10) highlight that for many people ‘roots’ are of psychological importance, with elements of social and economic history embodied in landscape influencing cultural heritage. Family history was another interest that developed in the 1960s with many family history societies growing towards the end of the century (Samuel, 1994). Personal roots can be considered in relation to genealogy which Nash (2002) suggests can lead to a rethinking of identity as an incomplete inventory of the self. For example, genealogical research can involve investigating the involvement of ancestors in local industries and landscape change, finding out about the places ancestors lived in and the industries they worked in. In considering the roots of a place, Selman (1996) also suggests that rural areas may be characterised by local industries, which also contribute to a sense of local distinctiveness or the identity of a place. For example, rural history can also be about the mourning of the past, as in the case of industrial archaeology (Cossons, 2000: 13). Increased awareness of local place history may also influence future developments and decisions. Indeed in some cases raising awareness of a particular local history may be actively sought in order to meet a particular aim. For example, Crouch and Parker (2003) explore how neglected and alternative versions of local history and heritage can be used by groups

in order to promote interests and to seek alternative futures. They suggest that:

“The presentation of pasts which destabilise the present therefore aim to influence and disturb power relations through the representation of history” (Crouch and Parker, 2003: 405)

However, Hewison (1987) also warns that by focusing too much on the past we can risk losing capacity for creative change in the future. Indeed, as old industries die, people come and go, landscape features erode and the climate changes, a place will move on (Massey, 2005). Therefore local histories can contribute to the roots and identities of both people and places. Different levels of knowledge and opinions of these can influence future developments and the future of local and industrial history interests and activities. The development of natural history is now considered further.

Natural History

Natural history became a recognised social pursuit, rather than just few scattered naturalists working in isolation, in the seventeenth century (Allen, 1976). Thomas (1983) traces a cluster of changes which occurred between 1500 and 1800 resulting in new sensibilities towards plants, animals and the landscape and challenges against humanity's 'right to exploit'. For example, following mass raids on puffin colonies, parliament intervened with the Act of 1533 to protect eggs and wildfowl. However concern about plants and animals at this time was very dependent on their value to people (Sheail, 1976). Indeed, interests in botany were the first to develop linked to practical medical applications and the Society of Apothecaries (Allen, 1994). The Worshipful Society of Apothecaries of London was formed in 1617 (The Worshipful Society of Apothecaries, 2012). Then later in 1663 The Royal Society (of London) was founded, which was for many years the only national society involved in the study of natural history (Sheail, 1976). The Royal

Society gave subjects such as zoology and botany respectability and social standing, and encouraged data collection, accuracy of measurement and careful recording (Allen, 1994). However, it is thought that the first specific natural history society, the Temple Coffee House Botanic Club, was founded by 1689, linked to the Society of Apothecaries (Winter, 1996). It was thought that much of the enthusiasm for these early societies was lost in the mid-eighteenth century partially due to the general stagnation in British science at the time (Winter, 1996), however, by the mid-nineteenth century, many philosophical clubs originating in the late 1700s had evolved into natural history societies (Sheail, 1976).

Some key early natural history societies included the Aurelian Club, thought to be the first entomological/zoology society, which ran from 1745-1748, followed by the Society for Promoting Natural History in 1782 and the Linnean Society of London, founded in 1788, which went on to become the foremost natural history society in Britain (Sheail, 1976). Later, from the 1840s - 1850s, nearly all shire counties and districts had developed associations devoted to natural history (Winter, 1996). Then in 1885 the Selborne Society for the Protection of Birds, Plants and Pleasant Places formed followed by the Wild Flower Society in 1886 (Samuel, 1994). Another society which was founded at this time was the Fur, Fin and Feather Folk, set up in 1889 by a group of women who pledged not to wear the feathers of any birds not killed for food, and from this little group the Society for the Protection of Birds developed, becoming the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds in 1904 (Allen, 1976). The main aims of the society were then outlined as:

“Encouraging the better conservation and protection of wild birds...”

And:

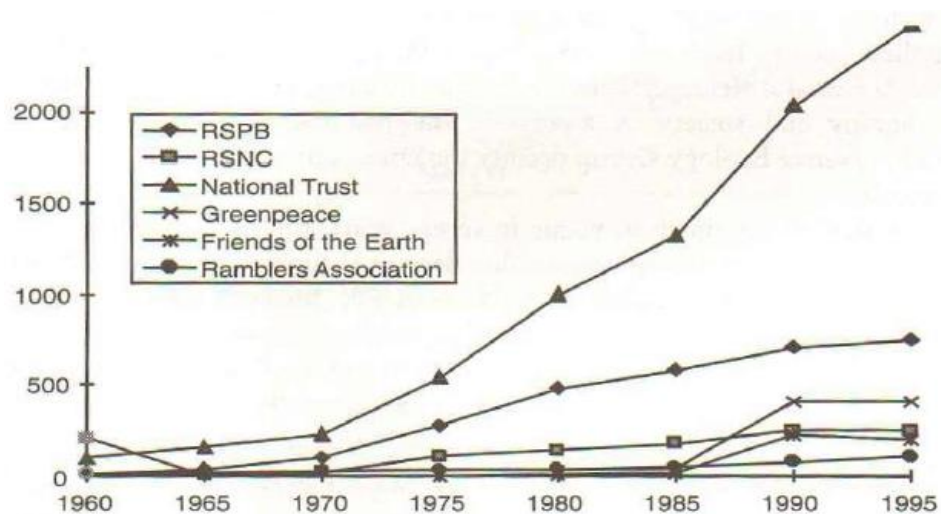
“Discouraging the wonton destruction of birds and the wearing of any feathers of birds not killed for the purpose of food...” (Cited in Evans, 1992: 42)

However, Beckett (2007) suggests that whilst the county societies flourished between the 1880s and the second-world war, they often operated in isolation from academia and professionals. Additionally, public interest in natural history increased from the 1880s with greater numbers visiting the countryside (Sheail, 1976) and by the late nineteenth century, nature walks and rambles were established both formally, and informally, in all sorts of British schools, supported by large numbers of books and pamphlets central to the instruction of natural history (Matless *et al*, 2010). In the early 1900s with an increase in outdoor recreation as well as increased threats to scenery and wildlife came public campaigns against planned developments, for example in coastal areas and the Lake District and interests in the development of National Parks (Sheail, 1976). Indeed, many environmental pressure groups were founded in the late 1800s and early 1900s, however the growth of many of these organisations was slow until the 1980s (Winter, 1996). Butler (1998) also suggests that, since the 1920s new countryside pursuits have become increasingly popular.

Following on from this, in 1936 the Forestry Commission opened the first Forest Park in response to increased public demands for access and amenity interests and in 1951 the first 10 National Parks were designated (Evans, 1992). Also in the 1940s The Nature Conservancy, the first scientifically grounded environmental agency in the world, was established (Potter, 1998). In the 1950s, as the number of government-designated nature reserves increased, public interest in conservation and management of these reserves and the countryside more widely also grew (Matless *et al*, 2010). There was also a rapid growth in public participation, including particular interests in nature and natural heritage from the early 1960s (Butler, 1998). In the 1960s and 1970s Nature

Trails offered a way of generating ordered enthusiasm for the countryside with both amateur and professional scientific knowledge being translated into popular forms (Matless *et al*, 2010). In the late twentieth century environmental initiatives became increasingly popular. There was another increase in public participation during the revitalisation of the Green Movement from the 1980s (Butler, 1998). For example, Winter (1996: 187) highlights that the RSPB adult membership stayed at around 8,000 between 1945-1960, however, after acceleration in the 1970s and 1980's numbers rose to 750,000 by 1995. The increases in membership of national environmental groups between 1960 and 1995 can be seen in Figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3: Membership of Environmental Groups (thousands) 1960-1995



(Source: Winter 1996: 167. Information supplied by environmental groups. RSPB figures refer to adult members)

Indeed, 1970 was significant being European Conservation Year (ECY) and the closest the conservation movement had ever been to embracing all aspects of conservation, with twenty-one countries joining together in a cooperative effort to encourage people to care more for their environment (Evans, 1997).

Increased numbers of conservation professionals, general volunteers and environmental enthusiasts have been observed over recent decades (Lawrence, 2006). For example, the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV)¹ currently assists 628,000 people in improve their environments and both directly and indirectly helps 1,936 local community groups (BTCV, 2011). Environmental interest group volunteering can include environmental interests as a political issue. For example, in the 1980s, a take-off of community involvement in environmental conservation and recreation followed the increased media interest in environmental problems (Gittins, 1993). There were also a large number of appeals and awareness campaigns in the 1980s and 1990s linked to umbrella campaigns, co-ordinating smaller and local activities, promoting a united movement and providing a focus and a common theme (Evans, 1997). Indeed, Winter (1996), found that, as conservation groups have become more politically engaged, awareness of the sources of environmental problems have increased. This increased general interest in the environment can also be seen in relation to the breadth of examples on the radio, television and in newspapers (Lawrence, 2009).

Finally, it is also worth noting that although practical conservation is carried out mainly by volunteers their management is commonly undertaken by professionals. For example, in a New Zealand study by Bell *et al* (2003) the conservation goals are set by the Department of Conservation (DOC), with a volunteer programme arranged by the DOC, which is said to improve relationships between the organisation and the community. However, membership levels of a conservation and environmental interest group may not be truly representative of levels of active volunteers there may be an interest, but lack of motivation for active participation. For example, Bell *et al* (2003) found that in the East Midlands, many people were members of conservation groups but were not necessarily actively involved.

¹ becoming The Conservation Volunteers (TCV) in 2012

Environmental group involvement can also be influenced by whether the group has any impact on the local environment and places. For example, Selman and Parker (1997), suggest that people very rarely connect with the idea of sustainable development, but are more primarily concerned with local issues and place. Therefore active participation may be more likely when positive, immediate local changes are likely to be made. However, Rackham (1994) suggests that people are more driven by fashionable campaigns linking to more glamorous parts of the world than the familiar environments at home. Rackham (1994: 7) also goes on to suggest that in order to conserve the natural environment landscape history needs to be considered in three ways: to understand how landscapes work and are maintained, to identify features which are inherently short lived from those with more permanent value, and to identify the abnormal. Therefore involvement with natural history and local environmental groups and activities may be driven by local interests or wider campaigns, however historical knowledge is of key importance to the success of these activities.

Conclusion

The main areas of literature that have been reviewed focus on the history and prevalence of volunteering, the type of people who are likely to be involved in volunteering, motivations for volunteering, different types of activities, relationships between volunteering and place, literature on volunteering activities involving natural and local history and broader volunteer developments in the UK . Throughout the literature review there is reference to belonging as an important key concept in relation to volunteering through involvement with, and belonging to, communities and places, as well as more social senses of belonging through involvement in particular activities or contributing to data and particular achievements. Place is also a key concept which is addressed in the literature, with connections to place and senses of place often providing motivations for volunteering and place being, at

various different levels, a location where volunteering takes place. These two key concepts frame the thesis with its focus on the nature of environmental and local historical interest groups, the volunteers who are involved with these groups and their senses of place and belonging and relationships with place.

In relation to the first objective of the thesis, analysing the composition, origins and activities of historical and environmental interest groups in The National Forest, the literature shows that various volunteer groups have formed over time with an increase in group formation from the nineteenth century (Davis Smith, 1994); however volunteering is still a popular activity in the twenty-first century (UK Parliament, 2011). Whether periods of increasing interest in local history and the environment are significant to the formation of groups in this study will be discussed. The literature also highlights how environmental and historical interests can be intertwined (Beckett and Watkins, 2011) with environmental interests sometimes being linked to nostalgia for rural roots (Winter, 1996). Examination of whether there are intertwined environmental and historical interests amongst, and/or within the groups involved in this study is also undertaken. The role of amateur enthusiasts is highlighted in the development of natural history and heritage interests. For example it has been shown that amateurs can play a key role in producing data about nature (Lawrence, 2006) and it is suggested that amateurs are likely to play an important role in both historical (Falconer, 2000) and environmental (Ellis and Waterton, 2004) recordings and expertise in times to come. Whether the groups in this study are involved in recording historical and/or environmental data in or about particular places will be investigated, together with the scale at which this is significant (local, regional, national, international). In relation to the initial formation of historical interest groups, the literature highlights that the mid to late 1900s were a key time in the development of local history interests resulting in the development of large numbers of historical interest groups (Crang, 1995) and that there was a rapid expansion in interest in preserving old industrial sites in the 1960s

(Cossons, 1993), with industrial heritage becoming a mainstream interest from the 1980s (Falconer, 2000). The industrial heritage of the area now known as The National Forest and how this has influenced historical interest groups will be investigated in the following chapters, as well as whether these historical interest groups emerged during the timescale indicated above. In the case of environmental interest groups there have been societies focusing on natural history interests since the 1600s, however it was not until the early 1900s that general public interests in wildlife and outdoor recreation developed (Sheail, 1976), with interests in environmental protection and growth in environmental organisations really taking off in the 1980s (Winter, 1996). Therefore it is expected that there will be some similar trends seen in the empirical data gathered on groups in The National Forest.

Considering the second objective relating to the personal motivations and experiences of volunteers, wider literature on volunteering suggests that the likelihood of people volunteering will be influenced by where they live and their relationships with places (Kearns, 1995; Rochester *et al*, 2010). Additionally Rochester *et al* (2010) suggest that those in rural areas are more likely to be involved in volunteering than people who live in urban areas. The literature also highlights that voluntary involvement in local places may be encouraged through government and community initiatives (Kearns, 1995; Selman and Parker, 1997; Edwards, 1998; Hobson, 2011). 'The National Forest' is a quango organisation, as well as a place, and whether this designation has encouraged the development of voluntary groups in this study will be considered. There are various typologies of volunteering, for example, Davis Smith's (2000) volunteer typology, Clary *et al*'s (1996) categories of motivation and Stebbins' (1996) types of leisure volunteering will be used and evaluated. In relation to environmental and local history groups studies highlight that, motivations for volunteering can include both social duty (Selman and Parker, 1997) and personal interests (Hustinx and Lammertyn, 2003; Rochester *et al*, 2010). Additionally, interests in local history and family history can be linked to motivations

about discovering and understanding personal roots (Nash, 2002) and local distinctiveness (Selman, 1996). This connects to consideration of volunteers' links to and understanding of local places and their personal motivations for volunteering. Place belonging is therefore a significant concept in this study.

Hughes' (1997) suggests that an important aspect of belonging is about joining in with community activities. Communities are made up of different groups and individuals with different visions of place and community (Crouch and Matless, 1996). Therefore voluntary participation can be considered a way of developing a sense of belonging. This can be termed as belonging through 'doing' or through 'collective actions' such as community involvement. Belonging can also be discussed in terms of residence. Local participation is also said to be primarily concerned with local issues and place (Selman and Parker, 1997), so participation may also be considered in relation to senses of belonging to, and involvement with, particular places as well as any communities associated with them. Indeed, Delanty (2010) suggests that communities are about the possibility of belonging. Therefore there can be a physical sense of belonging to a community or a particular place but this does not necessarily translate to belonging in a more social sense without some elements of active participation in that place or particular communities, whether based on place or social groupings. This idea of belonging relates to ideas about participation and particular places or communities. Conversely, Buchecker *et al* (2003), highlight that even social senses of belonging can become lost when connections with the local landscape are lost. Belonging can be considered in terms of kinship through cultural heritage (King and Clifford, 1985) or family history (Samuel, 1994) in that senses of belonging may develop through active interests and involvement in local cultural and family history interests. Therefore as a framework for this thesis, belonging can be considered in relation to kin, participation through collective action, mutual interests or local associations. This leads onto consideration of the third objective.

The third thesis objective focuses on place relations and belonging amongst volunteers and the environmental and historical interest groups. The literature suggests that volunteering and participation in a particular place can be influenced and encouraged through local place-based participation (Goodwin, 1998; Rose *et al*, 1997) which can provide opportunities to be involved in local decision making (Buchecker *et al*, 2003), empower local people (Gittins, 1993) and encourage place-attachment (Kearns, 1995). The literature shows that relationships with place can also be considered in relation to previous industries (Crang, 1998; Bell, 2007), social networks (Massey, 1996), cultural roots (Nash, 2002; Jones 2009) and community (Delanty, 2010). Therefore the literature on place includes consideration of senses of place and ways of belonging to and being actively involved with place. Indeed, place connections can be stronger through collective experiences and local family connections (Gooch, 2003a), with volunteering helping to develop place relationships as well as influencing participants values (Lawrence, 2009). However, some literature highlights that different claims to a particular place can result in tensions (Crouch and Matless, 1996) with restoration sometime resulting in a loss of local senses of history (Crang, 1995).

Places and relationships with places are about the connections between physical locations and people with boundaries and networks not necessarily focused on a particular place (Massey, 1996). Place can also be considered in relation to the production of meanings of that place (Cresswell, 2004). 'Places' and their meanings are constantly changing and can be considered in relation to their history, the socio-spatial environment, neighbourhoods and place attachment (Kearns, 1995). The way places are produced and presented is another aspect of the concept of place that informs this study. Amidst the contested definitions of place are the residents of that place who themselves influence the identity of their area (Clark *et al*, 2000) and how places have been produced and reproduced also play an important role

(Crang, 1995). Through collective experiences and active participation, shared interests and place belonging can be developed (Gooch, 2003a). This can be considered as belonging through mutual interests. Indeed, place can be considered to grow or change through collective experiences, including through the development of local knowledge and place connections spanning several generations (Gooch, 2003a) and volunteering can empower individuals to become involved in local changes (Rose *et al*, 1997). Active participation in volunteering can provide a means for integration and identification (Buchecker *et al*, 2003) and therefore opportunities to develop a sense of belonging in a particular place.

The concepts of belonging and place brought out in this literature form the framework for this thesis as follows. Belonging is a key concept with respect to 'doing', kinship, residence and mutual interests. Sense of place is a key concept in relation to place-based connections, place distinctiveness, production and meaning and active place-based involvement. There are also elements of overlap between concepts of place and belonging, for example senses of belonging to place and belonging to place-based action groups. These ideas are used throughout the thesis to work through the empirical material.

Although there is a range of research on volunteering, place and environmental and local history interests, there is no recent work considering voluntary involvement in both natural history and local history groups in a particular place despite their historical association. In this thesis historical and environmental groups and their volunteers will be considered in relation to their roles in, and relationships with a particular place, The National Forest, and volunteers' sense of belonging and their relationships to The National Forest and other places and features within it will be considered. This aims to go some way towards filling these gaps in the research. The concepts of place and belonging brought out in the literature provide an analytical framework for empirical chapters. The empirical chapters take forward

these ideas. There now follows a chapter on the methodology used in order to investigate these relationships.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Introduction

The previous chapter reviewed the main literature relating to volunteering, relationships between volunteers and place and the development of interest in environmental and historical voluntary activity. The purpose of this study is to investigate local history and environmental group volunteers involved in the area that has been ascribed the relatively new place identity of the 'National Forest'. This chapter goes on to discuss the practicalities, selection and application of research methods appropriate to this study.

As Kitchin and Tate (2000) discuss, all good studies need to be valid – relating to theory (for integrity) and practice (for soundness) – and reliable. In chapter 2, a review of the relevant literature sets the scene as to where this study fits into the wider field of geographical study. The study is based on the real life volunteers and historical and environmental groups in The National Forest and the methods for this research were chosen to gather relevant information about these individuals and groups in order that the empirical data can be analysed in relation to the literature. As this study is based in the social, rather than physical, sphere it was expected that there would be variation in the data gathered. However, methods were chosen in order to generate data that would be considered sound and relevant to the research aims, so that emerging themes within the empirical data could be identified as the study developed.

With the main aim of this research to investigate the nature of environmental and local historical interest groups, the volunteers who are involved with these groups and their senses of belonging and relationships with place, it was decided that the use of qualitative methods would be most suitable in order to extract more detailed and personal opinions. The intention of this study is to identify key themes

amongst local history and environmental based volunteers and groups in The National Forest. So the methodology is based predominantly on qualitative data of personal experiences and understanding, complemented by quantitative data on the types of people and groups involved with local history and environmental interests in The National Forest. Indeed, as highlighted by Graham (2005):

“... The way in which the aim of a piece of research is conceptualised and expressed contains within it assumptions that tend to direct researchers towards certain methods” (Graham, 2005: 30)

In particular, it was decided that a key feature of the research would be to gather individual views, opinions and stories in order to add depth to the understanding of the individuals and the groups they are involved with. Additionally, it was considered advantageous to be able to observe some of the groups ‘in action’ and ‘in place’ and to consider documentation relating to both the environmental and historical interest groups, and The National Forest. In more extensive studies, more than one method of data collection, a form of triangulation, is recommended (Bell, 1999). Also, as highlighted by Kesby *et al* (2005), using more than one technique, triangulation, allows cross-referencing. Through triangulation it is hoped to maximise understanding of the research question (Longhurst, 2003). Triangulation is popularly used in research and helps to substantiate research findings. Therefore, in order to gain a thorough understanding of these groups and volunteers and their roles in the place now known as The National Forest, several different methods of data collection have been used.

Choosing the Methodology

Triangulation of qualitative and quantitative methods can be used to support theories from different angles of viewing. In quantitative research, data is largely collected in order to test a hypothesis and in

qualitative research conclusions are reached via a more interpretative approach (Anderson, 2004). However, as Bryman (1984) highlights:

“Even research which relies almost exclusively upon one mode rather than the other often contains elements of both. Survey researchers often punctuate their research reports with brief transcripts of the verbalizations of their respondents. While the use of these transcripts is often to illustrate a quantitatively established point and thereby relieve the reader from the tedium of a large number of tables, their use is often to give some sense of how respondents view a particular cluster of issues” (Bryman, 1984: 88)

Also, as Mayerfeld Bell (1994) suggests, restricting research to the use of social surveys may result in distant interpretations and loss of meaning. As well as qualitative data adding to a predominantly quantitative study, quantitative data can also add to a predominantly qualitative study. In some cases, such methods have been used to encourage the acceptance of ethnographic research (Hughes *et al*, 2000). As above, it is recognised in this study that both quantitative and qualitative information will be gathered and considered. Quantitative data will help to identify some initial themes and trends, while the qualitative data will add depth and understanding. Predominantly the data gathered for this study is qualitative, through interviews with volunteers, however, information gathered through the interviews and other methods is also considered quantitatively. In this study, quantitative data includes of specific information about groups and individuals, such as group size, year of group foundation and a summary of the roles of interviewees within groups, which, in combination with the qualitative opinions and stories, create further opportunities for themes within the data to be identified and understood.

As highlighted by Crang (2002: 647), over recent years, geography has experienced an increase in both qualitative studies and the range of topics. However, despite this expansion of types and topics of

qualitative work within geography, Crang (2005) also suggests that there are still openings for developing different methods and approaches to ways of knowing and producing knowledge:

“Returning our attention to the rich yet ambiguous and messy world of doing qualitative research.... It remains inspired by ethical and political concerns, and practitioners are deeply concerned by the moral and political implications of their work. Some of the old taken-for-granted about fieldwork have indeed been replaced, but it is instructive to wonder what questions have not been asked” (Crang, 2005: 231-232)

Following on from this, Davies and Dwyer (2007) have suggested that, since Crang’s (2005) report on qualitative methods the main practical methods of human geographers remain principally the same: studying texts, conducting interviews, carrying out focus groups and engaging in ethnography. This study then makes use of interviews, ethnography and reviews of group documentation which are tried and tested methods suited to the themes to be investigated. In relation to this Davies and Dwyer go on to say:

“Making sense of place through engagement with what cannot be easily seen or narrated, but is instead more imagined or felt – corporeally or more viscerally – challenges existing methodological interventions. Invoking the absurd can be a deliberate strategy to look anew at the mundane and everyday” (Davies and Dwyers, 2007: 262)

However, with a ‘growing methodological repertoire’, outputs need to be consolidated and the research encounter needs to remain open to uncertainties (Dwyer and Davies, 2010: 95).

Using commonly practised qualitative methods of data gathering key themes have emerged through a combination of relevant literature and the data gathered, rather than the methodology being focused on the development of any pre-determined themes. Therefore, once the initial

methodology was decided upon the thesis was shaped by the information gathered and the associated themes that emerged. Indeed, as highlighted by Holloway and Kneafsey (2004):

“It might [thus] be that a turning away from ideas of culture, society, economy, politics and nature as analytical tools will increasingly produce other forms of rural study, opening up new perspectives on processes of rural change, experiences of rurality, and embodied and subjective forms of being in ‘rural’ space” (Holloway and Kneafsey, 2004: 4)

Such methods can be related to grounded theory. Grounded theory is defined by Strauss and Corbin (1994) as:

“A general methodology for developing theory that is grounded in data systematically gathered and analysed” (Strauss and Corbin, 1994: 273)

This thesis has been very much led by the themes which have emerged from the qualitative and quantitative information gathered. Grounded theory is about creative theory building, based on good observational work, but has been criticised for not acknowledging or being guided by implicit theories at an early stage (Silverman, 2000: 145). In order to address this as much as possible, Chapter 2 of this study (the literature review) drew out discourses relevant to volunteers, volunteering, environmental and historical interests and place from relevant research and the following empirical chapters relate themes from observational work back to these theories where applicable.

Another key consideration is that, in observing, speaking to and participating with volunteers from the environmental and historical interest groups investigated in this study, there will be interaction between the researcher and the researched. As highlighted by Cloke (2005) having awareness of self has become an important aspect of more recent human geography studies:

“Not so many years ago, Human Geographers were taught to be ‘objective’ in their studies, so that anyone else tackling the same subject would come up with the same results. They were in effect, being positioned as some kind of scientific automation whose background, identity, experience, personality and worldview needed to be subjugated to the need for objectivity... However the self does matter, and does influence the geography we practise. We do have different place- and people-experiences, different political and spiritual worldviews, different aspects to our identity and nature, and all of these factors will influence how we see the world, why our geographical imaginations are fired up by particular issues and, what and how we choose to study” (Cloke, 2005: 62)

It is also important to be aware that, as discussed by Jones (1997), in order to be more than simply informed, we need to be interacting with the stories of those we write about. In this sense the gathering of information for, and in the production of, this thesis will have been influenced not only by those researched, but by the interactions between the researcher and the researched, and the researcher and the data. The complexity of rural belonging and place identity research has been considered specifically in relation to the impact of the ‘research gaze’ through interviewing and focus groups in ethnographic research (Neal and Walters, 2006; Mayerfeld Bell, 1994; Crang, 1996). For example Crang (1996) highlights that, during his ethnographic participation with re-enactment groups:

“While I made no effort to conceal my interests, I functioned more as participant than observer” (Crang, 1996: 6)

He then goes on to highlight how in his research accounts he is also explicit about this positionality, as when participating it is difficult to distance oneself. Indeed, the role of the researcher and the researched need to be considered with regard to the information that is collected

and analysed using such methods. In the case of this research, the researcher functioned partially as participant, as much as this was possible during the short-term of the observations, and partially as observer. As highlighted by, De Laine (2000):

“Observing what those who are not fieldworkers do not do which fieldworkers actually do might advance an understanding of role-related activities performed by ethnographers when in research mode. Ordinary members do not observe activities, people and situations in order to understand them sociologically. Nor do they perform a role that consciously requires balancing participation with observation, and closeness with distance. Ordinary citizens do not probe into the lives of their friends with the view to gathering information about them which later they may disseminate uncensored for wider public viewing” (De Laine, 2000: 94)

Indeed, De Laine (2000) suggests that in fieldwork the researcher may have multiple and overlapping roles which can result in ethical and practical dilemmas. However, in the case of this research, participation was during one-off contacts with groups. This meant that relationships were not built up between the researcher and those researched and therefore such ethical dilemmas did not become an issue. The practicalities of participant observations are also considered further in the section on ethnographic observations and below.

So, in relation to this kind of research, a researcher can also choose to be overt or covert in their role. In this study, all group contacts were made overtly, with a full explanation of the reason for wanting to interview volunteers or attend group meetings and activities. However, when attending group meetings and activities, not all participants were aware of the reason for my presence, although I openly told any volunteers who asked. Indeed, Gillham (2005) suggests that the safest stance ‘ethically’ is to be overt about one’s role and research, but to also be aware of the unavoidable consequence that people’s

perceptions of you and levels of cautiousness will change. Indeed it is likely those being researched could have either consciously or subconsciously altered their behaviour and comments knowing that the information they were revealing was being observed as part of a research project. Additionally, the data gathered will depend upon the level of access to volunteers and groups. For example, this may be limited by time constraints of the researcher due to other commitments, such as work, as in the case of Fielding (2000). Indeed, with regard to this, due to working full-time and working on this project part-time, interviews and observations were arranged during the weekends and evenings.

Finally, during the time-span of the study, relationships and identities will have changed and developed, both amongst the volunteers and for the researcher. Particularly, in the case of this study, which has taken place on a part-time basis, more time has elapsed during the research than during an equivalent full-time investigation, with the main empirical research being undertaken between 2004 and 2008. Additionally, from the outset of initial reading for the study, my ideas developed and changed with developments in the study area and themes. For example, some initial ideas were based around happiness and conservation volunteering in The National Forest in comparison to another location. My initial reading focused on marginal countryside identities before turning to focus on the identities of those involved in local environmental and historical activities, with another initial idea for the study being: Understanding the countryside: local history and environmental action 1960-2000. The focus then turned to environmental and historical interest group volunteers in The National Forest; The National Forest being a new identity ascribed to the local area and an area which has seen significant, rapid landscape changes in relation to this.² So, finally, the title of the study became: An investigation into historical and environmental interest groups, and their

² Further development of themes once the data gathering began will be discussed later in the chapter

volunteers, in the National Forest. With the focus of the investigation being on the composition and activities of these groups, the volunteers who make up these groups their experiences and motivations, and finally to what extent the location of the groups and the places the groups are active within are significant.

Keeping a research diary is recommended by several authors e.g. Silverman (2000); Healey (2003); Crang and Cook (2007); Fielding (2000) in order to record experiences and keep track of research developments and relevant sources, and Crang (2005) also suggests that it is important to be able to trace shifts in ideas through making theoretical memos. So a series of notes were made during the process of this study in order to track progress and the development of ideas relating to specific experiences and the emergence of key themes. In addition, notes on interviews and observations were made as soon as possible at or after these events. This is important to ensure any important descriptions of events and potential questions which arise can be recorded (May, 1997).

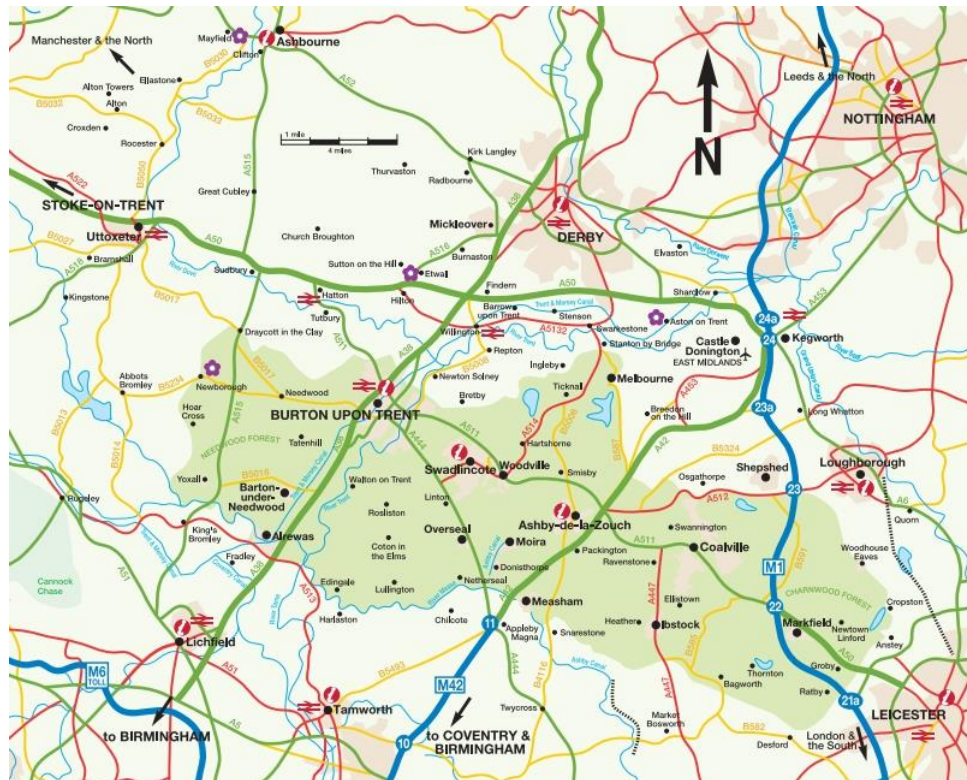
The first stage of empirical study consisted of the development of a comprehensive list of local historical and environmental interest groups, to determine what groups were relevant to this study. This was followed by one-to-one interviews using a series of pre-determined open questions (see later section on semi-structured interviews where this methodology is justified) in order to find out more detail on the groups, their volunteer and thoughts, options and relationships with place. These interviews were carried out with historical and environmental group volunteers from each group for which a willing interviewee could be found. Ethnographic participation was carried out with a selection of the groups on a one-off basis (see later section on ethnographic observation where this methodology is justified) in order to provide additional detail and direct experience of some of the groups and volunteers. Consideration was also given to how the groups and National Forest publicise and promote themselves to the wider public, in

relation to how they explain and promote their involvement with the local environment, history and place. The different aspects of the methodology process will now be considered in further detail.

Research Area and Sources

The National Forest area was chosen as the place in which to situate the study (See Figure 3.1: Map of The National Forest). This was because The National Forest phenomenon is a fairly recent development, with one of its main purposes being to create a new identity for the area and the places within it. The National Forest is an interesting place for research in that it covers parts of three counties (Derbyshire, Leicestershire and Staffordshire), rural areas, villages, parishes, industrial areas (including post-industrial mining and pottery areas) and towns. A number of local history and environmental interest groups exist and the area has a varied range of histories and environments.

Figure 3.1: Map of The National Forest (produced by The National Forest Company)



(My Forest Holiday, 2012) produced by The National Forest Company

For the groups to be included in the research, they had to fit within the following criteria: they had to be made up of or run by voluntary participants involved in either local environmental and/or historical interest activities and geographically located in, or involved in working within, areas of the designated National Forest area at a local level. In order to gather information on the environmental and historical interest groups in The National Forest web searches were carried out, local libraries were visited to look for leaflets and posters, and tourist information branches were emailed.

The initial pilot group list³ was drawn mainly from the records of local groups at Swadlincote Library (South Derbyshire), which keeps a box file of records of local groups. Attending relevant events also allowed further group investigations, namely: The National Forest conference at

³ Used to produce eleven initial pilot interviews

Bretby Conference Centre in 2004⁴ and The National Forest LANDshapes project (also in 2004). Through the LANDshapes project events I met a number of representatives from the project's 'A list' of Leicestershire local history group contacts. Negotiating access to groups is influenced by presenting a suitable identity, an unthreatening image (Mulhall, 2003). Access to this LANDshapes project event was negotiated by making direct contact with the project officer (employed via the National Forest Company) and explaining my research interests to her. Making face-to-face contact with group representatives, at an initial National Forest meeting they had been invited to, worked well in developing a rapport with the volunteers and five interviews resulted from this. Six interviews resulted from initial email contacts but contacting the group representatives via letter did not result in any responses. Further interviewees were contacted both through email and direct phone calls, with contact details drawn from group documentation and promotional materials. These contacts generally had key roles within the groups, and may be considered as 'gatekeepers'. Gaining access to gate keepers is important as it will determine what resources and information can be accessed (Kitchin and Tate, 2000; Valentine, 2005), and gatekeepers have been defined as:

"Those individuals in an organisation that have the power to grant or withhold access to people or situations for the purposes of research" (Burgess, 1984: 48)

Often it was these gate-keeper contacts who ended up being interviewed, although, sometimes contact with these 'gatekeepers' led to interviews with other members, for example through my being invited to visit the groups and meet and speak with members. However, as highlighted by Valentine (2005), 'gatekeepers' can direct researchers to a narrow set of members and it is important to be aware of and

⁴ Although this event was predominantly about the economics of the project and did not provide any opportunities to gain contacts with local environmental and historical interest groups in the area

sensitive to this. Additionally, 'gatekeepers' will be providing the story of someone with a key role in the group, which may be different to that of a more general member. Some contacts were also made through ethnographic observations at group meetings and activities. Further group contacts were also made via the initial group contacts made. This approach is known as 'snowballing', a term described by Valentine (2005) as:

"... Using one contact to help you recruit another contact, who in turn can put you in touch with someone else" (Valentine, 2005: 117)

Described as a benefit by Valentine (2005), 'snowballing' also meant that named individuals may be targeted initially, which could lead to contact with other members of the group. However, the 'gatekeeper' may suggest a particular member of the group as a potential contact for the research, which may be influenced by their personal opinions, therefore having an effect on the information provided to the researcher, which in turn may affect the data collected for, and results of, the research. It is difficult to determine to what extent this took place.

Figure 3.2 lists the fifty-nine groups considered in the investigation and how they were included, although it should be noted that interviews carried out with volunteers involved in more than one group focused predominantly on only one of these groups, in order to avoid confusion. Where it was unclear which group an interviewee was referring to in an interview they were asked to clarify. Additionally, there may be other groups which cover environmental and historical interests that were not identified, as some groups may not have been advertised or known widely, or may just have not had a presence in the spheres of investigation during the study. For some of the groups it was also quite difficult to find out some of their details, such as when the groups were founded⁵, as this information was not readily available in group

⁵ See Chapter 4

documentation and/or volunteers spoken to did not know this information. During the study period it became apparent that some of the groups participated in a wider range of activities than it initially appeared, including some that turned out to have both environmental and historical interests, although they had not been classified as such. It must also be considered that some of the information about the groups provided by individual volunteers may be uncertain or incorrect. For example some volunteers had an idea when the group was founded but weren't exactly sure of the year and others suggested founding years which were different to that stated on the groups' documentation or websites. Therefore there must be some flexibility when considering group facts which may vary according to memory or opinion.

Figure 3.2: Table of Local History and Environmental Interest Groups in The National Forest 2003-2008 and Contact made as part of this research

No.	Group Name	Contact
1	Appleby Heritage and Environmental Movement	Interview
2	Ashby Canal Trust/Association	Interview
3	Ashby Woulds Local History Group	Interview
4	Ashby Museum (Friends of)	Interview
5	Bagworth Forward Group	Interview
6	Bagworth Historical Society	Interview
7	Barton under Needwood Civic Society	Interview and Participant Observation
8	BTCV National Forest	None
9	Burton Conservation Volunteers	Interview
10	Burton Natural History and Archaeology Society	None
11	Butterfly Conservation – East Midlands Branch	Interview
12	Charley Heritage Group	Interview and Participant

		Observation
13	Charnwood Museum (Friends of)	None
14	Charnwood Sunday Group	Interview and Ethnographic Observation
15	Claymills Pumping Engines Trust	Interview and Participant Observation
16	Coalville Historical Society	None
17	Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society	Interview
18	Derbyshire Wildlife Trust (encompassing the South Derbyshire sub-group)	Interview and Ethnographic Observation
19	Derbyshire Amphibian and Reptile Group	Interview
20	Derbyshire Archaeology Society	Interview
21	Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group	Interview
22	Derbyshire Conservation Volunteers	Interview
23	Derbyshire Family History Society	None
24	Derbyshire Mammal Group	Interview
25	Derbyshire Ornithological Society	Interview
26	Desford and District Local History Society	None
27	Donisthorpe and District Local History Group	Interview
28	Etwall and Burnaston Local History Society	Interview
29	Friends of Eureka	Interview and Participant Observation
30	Friends of Moira Furnace/Moira Furnace Trust	Interview
31	Friends of Rosliston Wood (Committee Only)	Interview
32	Hartshorne Local History Society	None
33	Ibstock Historical Society	None
34	Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust	Interview
35	Leicestershire and Rutland Family History	None

	Society	
36	Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society	Interview
37	Leicestershire Archaeology and History Society	Interview
38	Leicestershire Industrial History Society	Interview
39	Magic Attic	Interview
40	Measham Museum	Interview
41	Measham Village History Group	Interview
42	Melbourne Historic Research Group	Interview
43	Nanpantan Victorian Garden	None
44	Ratby Local History Group	None
45	Repton Village History Group	Interview
46	RSPB Local Group – Burton and South Derbyshire	Interview and Participant Observation
47	Sharpe's Pottery (Friends of)	Interview
48	South Derbyshire Badger Group	Interview
49	South Derbyshire Family History Group	Interview
50	South Derbyshire Local History Forum	Interview
51	South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group	Interview
52	Staffordshire Bat Group	Interview
53	Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (encompassing the Burton and District Local Group)	Interview
54	Swannington Heritage Trust	Interview
55	Thringston Archaeology and History Group	Interview
56	Ticknall Preservation and History Society	Interview
57	Whitwick Historical Group	Interview
58	Willington History Group	Interview
59	Witan Archaeology	None

Attempts were made to contact representatives from all fifty-nine groups, with forty-seven of the groups actually being represented in the interviews. Because the volunteers who offered themselves as group

representatives were usually in key group roles, the research focused more on those in official positions than the standard members. For example, fifty-two per cent of the volunteers involved in the interviews⁶ were committee members and forty-one per cent were founder members, with twenty per cent being both committee and founder members. In relation to gender, sixty-six per cent of those involved in the interviews were male, and it follows thirty-three per cent were female. Where contacts were made, the volunteers were then invited to take part in an interview for the study although not all chose to participate. Further discussion on the interview process is given below.

Semi-structured Interviews

Kitchen and Tate (2000) suggest that interviews are the most commonly used qualitative technique and describe an interview as:

“A complex social interaction in which you are trying to learn about a person’s experiences or thoughts on a specific topic” (Kitchen and Tate, 2000: 215)

By using opportunities to generate original textual documents, interview questions can be designed to link directly to research interests (Cope, 2003) and it was decided that interviews would be a good way of generating the main basis of information for this study.

However, there are several different interview strategies that can be considered. For example, Patton (1990) identifies the following four strategies: closed quantitative, structured open-ended, interview guide approach and informal conversational. The closed quantitative interview produces ‘objective’ information only which is unsuitable for this research as it does not generate the dialogue and opinions. Kitchen and Tate (2000) describe a structured open-ended interview as having:

⁶ Forty-one interviews were undertaken however two volunteers were present at one of the interviews. These figures include data on all forty-two of these volunteers.

“The conversation highly controlled by the interviewer... The interviewee’s responses are not constrained to categories...” (Kitchen and Tate, 2000: 213)

Such interviews therefore provide an opportunity to gain detailed responses and opinions from the interviewees, whilst making sure all they are all are asked the same questions. This is a good way of gathering different opinions and stories from participants whilst organising questions and responses so it is easier to draw out themes and commonalities amongst the research and keep the focus on the objectives of the research. The interview guide approach is based on covering certain topics without specific questions or predetermined wording, and the informal conversational approach generally lacks formal structure (Kitchen and Tate, 2000). The interview guide approach thus allows more flexibility and the informal conversational approach can result in very lengthy interviews. However the risk of using either of these techniques is that there will be greater variation in the interviews and not all topic areas will be covered⁷. Indeed, Gillham, (2005) suggests that the semi structured interview may be the most important way of conducting a research interview because of its balance of structure, data quality and flexibility. In the case of this study, semi-structured, or structured open-ended, interviews have been used in order to keep interviews focused on the topics of the study but also to gain detailed responses. In some cases, interviews became less structured as interviewees moved between topics even after a particular question had been asked. This presented challenges as it sometimes made it difficult to keep track of the questions, although it also produced some interesting extra information (see below).

Semi-structured interviews provide the opportunity for an open response from participants, using their own words (Longhurst, 2003). In addition, such interviews offer opportunities to explore layers of

⁷ Although the use of a check list can help

feelings, values and processes below the surface layer of facts (Laoire, 2000). Indeed, Gillham (2005) suggests that, although a significant amount of preparation and analysis are required to carry out semi-structured interviews, the format provides flexibility, balanced structure and quality data. In this study, and as in the Valentine (2005) study, each interview was different and had its own pattern. For example, some volunteers began talking generally about their interests before scheduled questions being used as prompts, whereas others ended up following the interview schedule as written and some had to be encouraged to provide more detail and only gave very short responses despite the open questions. In the case of the volunteers who talked readily, care had to be taken to note which topics from the interview schedule had been covered and which had not, so comments on those which had not could be explored later in the interview. Indeed, the semi-structured interview may be a story constructed by the interviewee rather than being engaged in a question and answer approach (Gillham, 2005).

Initially, eleven pilot interviews were carried out to make sure the questions were satisfactory. These initial interviews worked well and therefore these initial questions were kept, used, and remained the same for the rest of the study. In total, forty-one interviews were completed, with these forty-one interviewees being involved with forty-seven of the groups considered in the study⁸. In the case of empirical data, the more interviews carried out, the more explanations can be supported, qualified or expanded (Gillham, 2005). The remaining groups were not represented by volunteers from their groups as either no-contact details were found for these groups, volunteers who were contacted did not wish to participate in the study or suggest any alternative contacts from their group, or despite trying to make contact

⁸ Over sixty per cent of the interviewees said they were involved in more than one voluntary group, although not all of these groups were groups covered in this study. The interviewees involved with more than one voluntary group were involved with between two and seven voluntary groups each.

with individuals they did not reply to emails/phone messages that were sent/left.

Ideally interviews should be carried out in a neutral, informal (but not noisy) and easily accessible location (Longhurst, 2003). This would have been the ideal situation for the interviews to take place, however due to the nature of the research this was not always possible.

Volunteers were usually willing to take part interviews as long as they took place somewhere convenient to them and their activities.

Therefore interviews were generally carried out in local buildings – a coffee shop in Market Bosworth, a community shop in Ibstock, Sharpe's pottery museum in Swadlincote, village and church halls and, in one case, a volunteer's house (during a group meeting being held there).

Ideally, interview rooms should be comfortable, uninterrupted and free from background noise (Gillham, 2005). However, with the interviews being held at a variety of locations to suit volunteers, and in some cases during and after group meetings, this was not always the case. For example, in one interview, other volunteers were tidying up the room around us as the interview took place. This resulted in a degree of background noise on the interview recording, with the sound of volunteers moving table and chairs and talking in the background. Fortunately the interview recording was still clear enough to transcribe without much difficulty. However, in other cases, a quiet, separate room was available for the interviews, which was ideal for concentrating on and recording the interview. In two cases, held at a conservation task, the interviews were conducted outdoors. This brought with it some additional considerations. For example, during one of these interviews it was raining and the Dictaphone had to be used through a plastic bag.

Additional notes were made in case the recording could not be heard and it was fortunate that these additional notes were made as Dictaphone did not record successfully at this interview. In order to minimise such occurrences the Dictaphone was tested before each interview and battery levels and space left for recordings checked to make sure these were sufficient.

Unfortunately, some volunteers were unavailable or unwilling to meet up for a face-to-face interview preferring to answer interview questions on the phone. Parfitt (2005) suggests that the disadvantage of telephone interviews (compared to face-to-face) include reduced ability in handling longer and more complex questions and control over completion, however advantages include gaining access to the interviewee, speed and cost. Indeed if I had not agreed to telephone interviews with some of the participants it is unlikely that these interviews would have taken place. A disadvantage of telephone interviewing is that visual clues and the interpersonal connection between interviewer and interviewee can be lost, making these interviews harder to keep going (Gillham, 2005). Fortunately, the telephone interviews seemed to produce just as much of a story from the volunteers as the face-to-face interviews. Approximately a third of the interviews were carried out over the telephone. One volunteer asked if they could answer the questions by email. However, they were encouraged to participate over the phone in order to be consistent, generate information based on instant responses and allow for a conversational aspect with the opportunity to ask for additional information or clarification made possible. Although the visual clues are lost in the telephone interviews, the talking is still live and 'reactive' with a sense of engagement and also people talk more than they would write (Gillham, 2005). Fortunately, the volunteer who initially wanted to be interviewed by email did, in the end, agree to be interviewed over the phone so that all interviews were 'live'.

Interviews lasted between around twenty minutes and an hour and a half, with only a few lasting more than an hour and most being around half an hour long. The telephone interviews were generally between twenty minutes and half an hour long, so not generating quite as much detail as the face-to-face interviews. A digital Dictaphone was used to record the interviews, which were then transcribed word-for-word. By using recording equipment, the researcher is enabled to concentrate on

the interview and engage in proper conversation without trying to write down responses at the same time, as well as an accurate and more detailed record of the interview to refer to (Valentine, 2005). Files of the interview recordings have been stored on a password protected computer and external hard drive (all but one of the original interview recordings have been kept, although, unfortunately, one original interview recording was accidentally recorded over –after the interview had been transcribed). The careful use of pseudonyms and anonymity is important in protecting participants' identity (De Laine, 2002). Each interview/interviewee was given a number and the date of the interview recorded with interviewees told that their names would not be used directly in the thesis. Throughout the thesis, interviewees are referred by their interview number in order to keep the interviewees anonymous as much as possible. However, in order to draw themes from the study it was important that the gender, group type, general role of the interviewee within the group and specific comments from the interview are discussed, with direct identification of the group that the volunteer is involved with/referring to avoided as much as possible. These descriptive identifiers are used to allow themes to be considered in the light of this background information about the participants.

In the case of most interviews there was only the one interviewee from the voluntary group present. Where others were present, in only one interview did another volunteer actively participate in the interview. In transcribing that interview, the participation by the second volunteer present was also noted. Additional responses in the face-to-face interviews that were recorded tended to be mostly verbal, such as laughter or tone of voice. Both in the case of face-to-face and telephone interviews, some volunteers produced additional information about the groups (heard via rustling noises in the telephone interviews) and the telephone interviewees then proceeded to offer to post the leaflets or newsletters that they had produced. The majority of the volunteers were keen to talk and their stories and responses flowed easily. The few that offered minimal comments were all face-to-face interviewees. Indeed, in

relation to this, the information gathered will be partially determined by what subjects choose to reveal:

“The event horizons that poststructural geography posit as part of project of freeing up meanings has to be squared with the rhythms of familiarity and expectation that also govern and limit them. Or to put this another way, events are also scripted and prepared” (Fish, 2004: 41)

So, in the choice and application of the methodology - choosing interviews as the main source of empirical research - it also needs to be recognised that volunteers may choose what and how much information they give. This may be particularly the case where interviews had been arranged well in advance and participant had had some time to think about the study they were going to take part in. The idea of pre-scripted events can also be considered in relation to ethnographic observations, which are considered in more detail next.

Ethnographic Observations

Participant observation is also used in this study. Participant observation is about understanding communities from the inside (Cook, 2005) and can provide an opportunity for lengthy engagement and the acquisition of a degree of know-how, appropriate conduct and common knowledge of the people and places being studied (Laurer, 2003). This can result in a much more detailed understanding of a community's culture. However there may also be issues as, over a period of time, friendships may develop between the researcher and the researched community, which will need to be recognised in the analysis of the data gathered (if applicable). This concern was not applicable to the study as the ethnographic observations carried out were one-off occurrences. An initial pilot ethnographic observation was carried out at a BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) weekend held in the Leicestershire part of The National Forest. However, this early experience did not directly relate to a specific local BTCV group considered in the study (it

was made up of 'one-off'⁹ volunteers who were only together for that one weekends activity) so this participant observation was not used in the final thesis. Again, as with the pilot interviews, this pilot ethnographic observation provided an opportunity to see if the techniques would work and provide adequate information on relevant topics for the study.

Seven further participant observations with seven of the environmental and historical interest groups in the study were then carried out. In this study, participant observation was carried out through the one-off attendance of selected group meetings and events. Therefore, engagement was typically over a period of hours and minutes rather than a lengthier ethnographic study. This was deemed satisfactory due to the participant observation element being used as part of a multi-method study rather than as the main source of data. However, the ethnography still enabled a viewing of the groups in practise, rather than just a reported account of what the groups do:

“[So] the question becomes what is done not what is represented, through proliferating operations and practises rather than an operation of a hidden structure” (Crang, 2003:499)

In choosing the groups to be studied in further detail through participant observation, a selection of groups of different sizes from across the environmental, historical and combined environmental and historical categories was decided upon in order to provide a wide range of different stories and experiences. These choices were also based on the groups for which a direct contact had been secured and those that were happy for me to attend one of their events/meetings. Ethnographic observation research was developed in order to experience and gain views from 'inside' the everyday experience and to understand what people do as well as their verbal accounts of their actions (Cook, 2005).

⁹ Although these volunteers may have regularly have attended different conservation weekends in different places and with different people.

Participant observation is a systematic and disciplined study, which brings about new understandings of social actions and ways of viewing the social world (May, 1997). There are countless spaces in which participant observation can be carried out, but, unlike with more controllable research, researchers should not expect things to follow a pre-planned schedule (Cook, 2005). In this study the ethnographic participations followed the structure of the groups' activities during the events attended, rather than a structure put together by the researcher, as in the case of the semi-structured interviews.

Three main considerations have been identified in ethnographic research: access, the role the researcher will take, and what data can be constructed and used (Cook, 2005). In the case of this study, groups were very open and willing to have me as a researcher, attend their meetings and events. However, as many volunteers stated, their groups are in fact run as groups open to the public and encouraging new participants is frequently an objective. For example, for some of the groups, there is just a small entrance fee to attend their talks and anyone can turn up, pay and attend, whether they are a member or not. Other groups hold activities and events in the public sphere, or at a location which they open up to the public at certain times and dates, where anyone can turn up and observe or become involved. However, some of the groups meetings are held quietly, without promotion and sometimes in places as private as volunteers' own houses. One group observed met at a private dwelling and attending this meeting required agreement from a 'gatekeeper' volunteer – a committee member and the owner of the house.

The role of the researcher in ethnography is to observe, be sensitive and receptive to individuals, and allow for the growth and progression of ideas whilst being aware that those who know they are being observed may subsequently alter their behaviour (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). In this study, it was only in the case of the small, private, group meeting that all the participants knew of my role as a researcher. This was inevitable

given the nature of this group. In the other, more public events and activities, only those that I had been involved with prior to the observation, and those who asked me about my interests during the session, were aware of my role as a researcher although I did not consciously adopt a covert approach. Additionally with different groups, there were different levels of participation. For example, at the talks attended, participation and interaction with the other attendees was limited to short periods at the start, break and end of the talk. These talks were, however, still included in the participant observations as they were the most common activities for these particular groups. In contrast, in the case of one environmental group activity I attended, participation was much more interactive, working as small teams carrying out a variety of nature conservation tasks.

As ethnography is about the relationship between the researcher, the data and the product that the researcher produces via the way in which they choose to represent the data, it can be argued that this research cannot be separated from its relationship with the researcher (Pole and Morrison, 2003). Participant observation provides direct access to phenomena and should not only be an observation, but a commentary on culture, society and geography of the spaces and places of activity (Laurier, 2003). By viewing the groups in situ and in practice, this allowed for further reflection on the culture of the groups, in relation to emerging themes. However, developing close personal relationships with the volunteers was not an issue with the individual participant observations being carried out over a short period of time.

Ethnography can be both a satisfying and an exhausting process. Creating meaningful spaces for interaction through taking on a variety of roles can be tiring. 'Fieldwork fatigue' may result due to the energy and motivation required in such changing roles (Kneafsey, 2000). In this study, with the one-off dimension of the participant observations, fatigue was felt more in relation to the study being carried out on a part-time basis whilst also working full-time (in a post unrelated to the study), for

example when attending an evening meeting a drive away after a full day at work. Another key element to ethnographic research is the ability of the researcher to remain flexible. Appointments may have to be altered or cancelled, for example, due to adverse weather. Additionally, it may be difficult to keep to a pre-planned schedule, group characters will vary and the researcher will require persistence and resourcefulness to gain access to groups (Cook, 2005). Fortunately, all the group activities I planned to attend went ahead as scheduled. Due to available opportunities, seven ethnographic participation sessions were undertaken between 2007 and 2008 for use in the study. Decisions on which groups to work with on the participant observations were based on the openness of the groups to the research, practicalities and relevance to the research, as well as trying to cover a range of local historical and environmental interests and activities from Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire to determine whether opinions and identities vary across the groups' genres and locations. These participant observations included four environmental groups, three historical interest groups and one group with environmental and historical interests. Three of these were talks, one was a private committee meeting, one was a public open day, one was a walk, one was a nature conservation task and one was a drop-in session for historical research. The purpose of these ethnographic participations was to see some of the groups in action and provide a general observational overview of a selection of the groups and case study opportunities.

Research ideas and methods may change along the way and alterations in methodology may be required due to the demands of participants (Ely *et al*, 1991). The complications involved with fieldwork can also leave researchers prone to personal stress (De Laine, 2002) and loneliness can be an issue despite the research involving being a part of the group studied (Fielding, 2000). In relation to this, it can be advantageous for the researcher to have a good knowledge of self and characteristics so that emotion can be developed as a source of

strength (Ely *et al*, 1991). Indeed such research is bound to take-up and become a significant part of the researcher's life during the study. This may be considered an invasion and led to the 'letting go' of the experience being extremely difficult (Fielding, 2000). Although there was no long-term attachment to any particular voluntary group, the study did indeed become a significant part of life, taking up the majority of any spare time outside of work and the impact of this involvement changed as different stages of the investigation progressed.

Relationships may be expected to reform as the experience of research causes a repositioning. Both the researcher and the subjects are part of a multiple context, strung together through experiences and actions, forming different biographies and self-identities (Cook and Crang, 1995). Additionally, once the researcher has developed relationships with the group and individuals within it, the researcher must be aware of the risk of bias, such as using leading questions in qualitative research. For example, some of the interviews took place before the participant observation, some during, and some directly afterwards. Particularly in the cases where interviews were carried out prior to the participant observations, opinions on the group had already been given by the volunteer interviewed and I was aware of these opinions. Therefore, I also drew on these insights, although I also tried to consider any opposing perspectives and treat the participant observations in a critical fashion.

Difficulties may also arise from the creeping in of the researcher's personal interest causing distortions in the narrative (Mayerfeld Bell, 1994). Although personal involvement is an important part of the ethnographic study process, reflecting on personality in the construction and production of an ethnographic study is something that is often considered a difficult part of the process for ethnographers (Hughes *et al*, 2000). For example, in the case of the nature conservation task, it was easy to become involved and focused on the activity in hand and I had to sometimes remind myself of the purpose of being there and

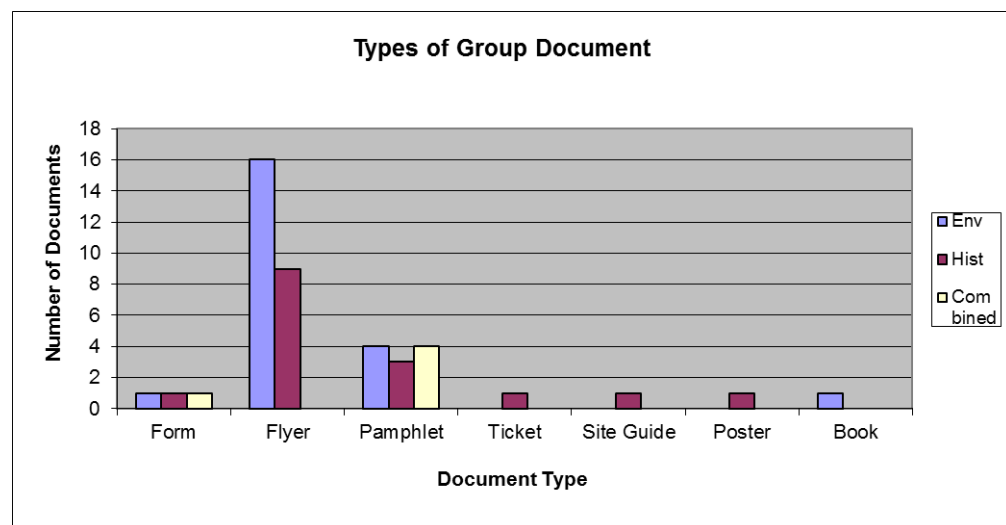
make sure I observed the dynamics of the group and took note of the volunteers who spoke to me as well as participating in the activity.

Also, in comparison with the interviews that were recorded live, in order to minimise actions that would alter volunteer/group behaviour through my presence, I did not use any obvious recording equipment during the ethnographic observations. I took some notes, as and when this was possible, and I wrote up my observations as soon as possible after the participant observations, although, some of the details of the events may have been lost or forgotten as a result. By only attending one-off activities/meetings, my involvement with the groups can be said to have provided that of a 'new-be' volunteer experience rather than that of a long-standing volunteer, or of a member of the public attending a one-off event put on by the groups. This was the intention, because the aim of the experience was to provide a taster experience of the group, with more of a personal involvement than through the interviews, which were the main source for the research.

Textual and Iconographic Analysis

Textual analysis is about considering how information is structured and organised (Rapley, 2007), whilst iconographic analysis is about the identification, description, and interpretation of the content of images (Daniels and Cosgrove, 1988). Forty-two group documents were collected and analysed, representing just over half (twenty-one) of the forty-one groups who said that they produced publications (See Figure 3.3). These documents came from ten historical groups, ten environmental groups and one group with both environmental and historical interests. The documents considered were produced between 2002 and 2008. This sample of documentation was used in order to add to other information gathered on the groups and to increase understanding. Additionally 57 websites were accessed in relation to the groups, with 27 of the groups found to have their own websites by 2007.

Figure 3.3: Group Documents Considered



'Culture is everywhere', it may not have clear boundaries, and text is anything with signifying structure, that refers meaning (Doel, 2003: 505). As discourses can be articulated in a variety of forms, intertextuality – the meaning of each text or image brought together convincingly with other texts and images - is important in understanding discourse (Rose, 2001). Therefore, texts and images used by the groups in order to portray themselves and their relationships with places in The National Forest are considered as well as information gained through the semi-structured interviews and ethnographic participations. Geographical analysis of cultural texts follows spatial, temporal and social traces of real and imagined representations and practises (Doel, 2003). For example, in relation to The National Forest, The National Forest website, a National Forest book and LANDshapes (National Forest Heritage Project) website were examined. The National Forest texts and images are used to project the corporate images of The National Forest, and thus need consideration along with the various materials from groups (as summarised above).

Images produce systems of metaphors about landscapes of power and integrated visual methodologies which help us to understand how spaces are produced by manipulating images (Aitken and Craine,

2005). Cultural signs are visual forms 'encoded' with meaning, often despite minimalist representation, which then require 'decoding' (Bartram, 2003) and representation is a continuous element, rejecting strict separation between world and text - it is embedded in the world of which it is a part (Massey, 2005). For example, the representations projected by The National Forest will affect the image and identity of the place as they influence those who are looking at them and are affected, and interpreted, by those that are looking at them, especially in the case of the LANDshapes website where it is the 'viewers' themselves that contribute to the website. However, different sources may produce competing versions of places, local history and the environment. Indeed, in relation to different versions of local cultures being produced, textual methods are themselves social constructions, taking on the characteristics of their users (Aitken, 2005). Therefore group documentations, publications and websites will display certain characteristics of the groups. Seldom static, cultural signs are best appreciated for suggesting cultural meaning rather than essential truth (Bartram, 2003). In this research the documents, publications and websites produced by the groups are considered in combination with other information gathered on the groups. Analysing texts can be problematic as there is no logical connection between the signifier and the signified and particular society codes of the time may affect the way we interpret texts (Aitken, 2005).

Particular issues arise in the study of websites, both in terms of textual and visual components with websites regularly changed and updated. Website may also offer a space for interaction, for example in the case of the LANDshapes website which during the LANDshapes project provided a way for local history and environmental interest groups and The National Forest can interact. All the group websites identified were also studied in the research (with some new websites emerging during the period of the research – and some disappearing) along with a selection of group leaflets and documents. All of the fifty-nine groups considered in this study, had a web presence at some point during the

period of investigation (2003-2011). In 2008, twenty-one of the groups had their own individual websites and only two groups were not mentioned on the Internet at all. Fifty-one of the groups were still present on the Internet at the last search in summer 2011, with twenty-nine now having their own websites. A detailed analysis of the websites is presented in Chapter 4. Group and National Forest documents were considered in order to gain a better understanding of the groups and of the National Forest, especially in relation to the way they choose to promote themselves to local communities and wider public. Analysis of a sample of group publications, documentations and websites is used as part of the triangulation methodology, as discussed earlier in the chapter.

Approaches to Analysis

By considering a range of materials, new insights can be produced, but there may be challenges in interpretation:

“Text based materials (such as diaries, letters, oral histories, transcripts of interviews or focus groups sessions) and other similar sources are rich in information... but present challenges for interpretation and representations” (Cope, 2003: 445)

The main base of empirical work for this study comes from interviews and their transcripts, ethnographic observations and group publications (printed documents and websites). Empirical data gathered is considered in relation to the literature discussed earlier in the literature review, in order to find relationships and patterns relevant to the aims of the research to minimise the risk of not acknowledging theories, which can be associated with grounded theory based on such observations. Indeed:

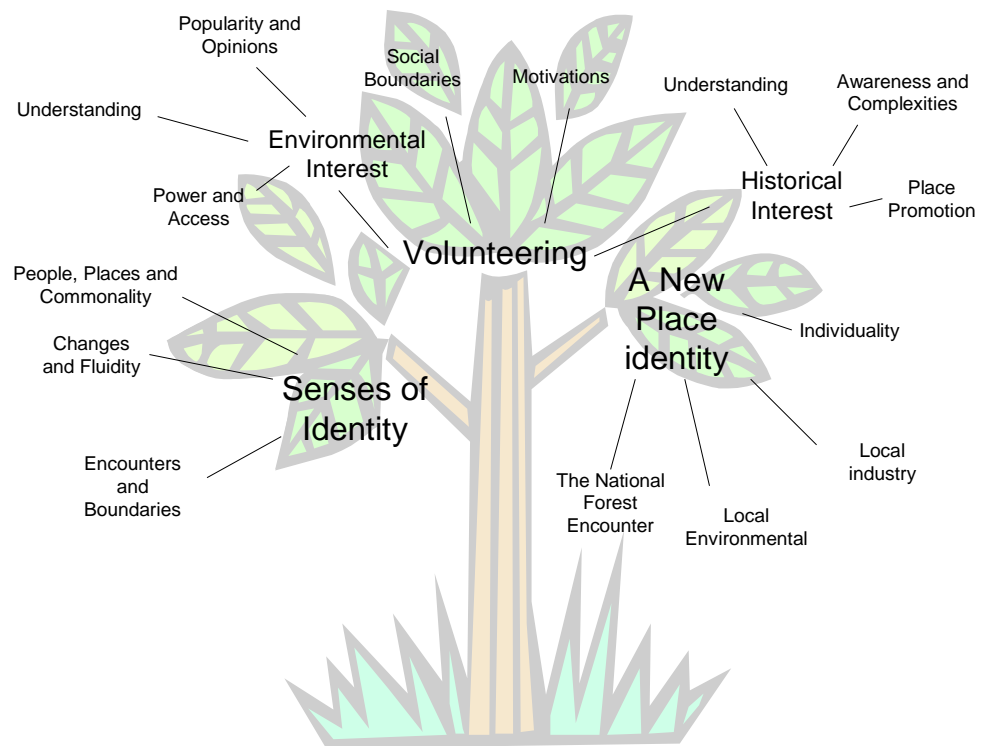
“To back-track from this world is not to abandon the expertise that has developed in investigating and exploring it. Instead, it is to go back to

the world with eyes full of wonder and to ask questions about the patterns we see” (Harrison *et al*, 2004: 7)

Exploring the commonalities and tensions of multiple perspectives is important in ensuring that the research has been rigorous enough (Cook and Crang, 1995). In order to determine commonalities and themes amongst the research coding has been used in analysing the data gathered. Thematic coding and narratives have been used in order to organise the data and to look for meanings within the transcriptions, participant observations and documents. Transcribing provides the opportunity to start to get a feel for the data, and coding helps to sort qualitative data into meaningful categories (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). Each of the interviews carried out in the research has been transcribed to assist with analysis. Narrative analysis preserves the words that people actually use, which provides a more vivid and compelling quality, as well as following the interview more faithfully than a researcher’s interpretation (Gillham, 2005). Narrative analysis is particularly relevant to the case study examples that are used in this study. However, Gillham (2005) also highlights the importance of data reduction, for example, through identifying the substantive statements in the narrative and through thematic analysis. Coding allows a compromise between precise summarisation and minimal loss of information in the process (Parfitt, 2005). The transcripts were read and re-read with coding used in order to highlight relevant sections following initial areas of interest. Indeed, coding is not just about re-reading/re-listening to materials, it is about being guided by the ‘interesting’ and ‘notable’ and looking for incidences of ‘deviant cases’ (Rapley, 2007: 126-127). Coding is useful for creating categories from open-format questions and for checking for patterns in the responses (Parfitt, 2005). It has been suggested that the formation of patterns and categories through coding is only the start and that these can be developed through four themes: conditions, interactions amongst the actors, strategies and tactics, and consequences (Strauss, 1987, in Cope, 2003). A coding tree is useful for structuring responses, and may be in the shape of a tree with ‘roots’

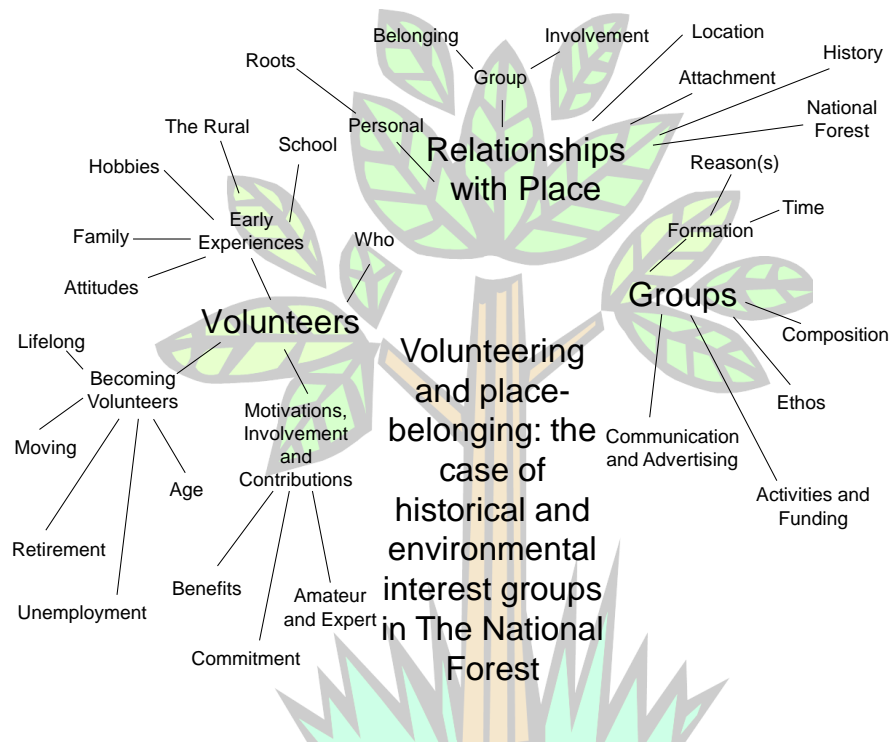
and 'branches' indicating the position and frequency of phenomenon (Kesby *et al*, 2005). During analysis of the data coding trees were produced in order to help structure themes emerging from the research. Splitting - the sub-categorising of data-bits (coded pieces of text) - and splicing - the interweaving of related categories – allows for insights developed through coding to be cross-checked (Kitchin and Tate, 2000). For example, the following coding areas were identified in the early stages of the study based on the literature read, initial research aims and issues raised by participants (see Figure 3.4):

Figure 3.4: Early Coding Tree



However as the empirical data was analysed further, new themes emerged, and a new coding tree was developed (see Figure 3.5). Indeed, as narrative and categorical analysis develop some initial categories will prove to be redundant (Gillham, 2005):

Figure 3.5: Developed Coding Tree



These emerging themes, based on the data gathered from the various data sources and background reading, inform analysis in the empirical chapters of the thesis.

Conclusion

This study focuses on qualitative research methods in order to gain a detailed understanding of environmental and historical interest groups and their volunteers in The National Forest. This is complemented by quantitative data on the volunteers and groups. As is generally recommended, triangulation is used in order to maximise understanding and cross-reference. The main source of empirical data for this study is semi-structured interviews, in order to maximise opportunities for flexible and open dialogue whilst retaining the focus on key elements relevant to the study. Ethnographic observations are used in order to add further depth to the analysis and to create an element of understanding the groups from the inside and in practise. With one-off

ethnographic observations being used it is recognised that there are both advantages and disadvantages – resulting in less comprehensive observations, but without the risk of personal attachment taking effect. Finally the analysis of group documents, publications and websites adds to the understanding of how the groups present themselves to the wider public and potential new volunteers, as well as providing some additional quantitative data about the groups. Analysis focuses on the development of key themes emerging from this empirical data (as in the case of grounded theory). However, in order to acknowledge relevant theories, these emerging themes are considered in relation to the literature, previously discussed in chapter 2.

Eleven pilot interviews and one pilot ethnographic observation were initially carried out in order to determine if the methodology was suitable. The choice of interview type for this study was semi-structured, due to the balance between structure and flexibility this provides, encouraging volunteers to tell the story of their experiences. Face to face interviews were carried out at a range of local locations, as well as a number of telephone interviews and were recorded on digital Dictaphone. The interviews, of generally half an hour in length, were transcribed. Interviews were used in narrative analysis throughout the study and in order to produce case studies. Seven ethnographic observations were undertaken by seven different activities carried out by seven different groups (included in the study), providing a live experience of the group's activities in practise. Notes on ethnographic observations were written during and after the events. Documents representing over half of the groups were also considered, as well as National Forest documents in order to gain a greater understanding, not only of activities, but how they choose to portray themselves to others. In relation to this, it was noticeable throughout the study that Internet representation frequently changed and developed. From this above research, thematic coding was developed with the production of coding trees in order to keep track of emerging themes.

The geographical focus for this investigation is The National Forest, and specific criteria were determined in order to focus on the identification of environmental and historical interest groups in this area. During the search for these groups, access to those in gate keeper roles within the groups and the impact of snow-balling were considered. Following on from this, fifty-nine groups were identified for involvement in the study, with forty-two volunteers involved in forty-seven of these groups being interviewed. Restrictions on access to groups and volunteers, due to my carrying out the research on a part-time basis, have been considered. In order to respect the confidentiality of those who have participated in this study, identities have been kept anonymous. A research diary has been made during the process of the research in order to keep track of the development of ideas, indeed, the title and focus of the research has changed and developed since the initial ideas. Another important consideration, in relation to these methods of data gathering, has been the relationship between the researcher and the researched. Throughout this study, I have been as open as possible with all those encountered as to the purpose of my research interviews and my attendance of group events.

Chapter 4: The Characteristics of Environmental and Historical Interest Groups in The National Forest

Introduction

This chapter focuses on groups with local environmental and historical interests in The National Forest and considers the differences and similarities and other aspects between them. As discussed in chapter 2, various pieces of research have been carried out on volunteering, relationships between volunteers and place and the development of interest in environmental and historical voluntary activity. However, none of this research considers the characteristics, commonalities and differences amongst a collection of different environmental and historical interest groups based in a particular geographical area.

This chapter aims to do that, considering when each group was formed and reasons behind the formation of these groups in relation to national developments and changes in local history and environmental interests. For example, in chapter 2 the literature review revealed that there has been some overlap in interests and the reasons for formation amongst environmental and historical interest groups. For example, with the formation of environmental groups sometimes linked to nostalgia (Winter, 1996) and historical interests often including aspects of natural history (Beckett and Watkins, 2011). Additionally, there was a growth in interests in local history from the mid-twentieth century (Cossons, 1993; Crang, 1995) and a surge of public interest and involvement in environmental groups from the 1980s (Winter, 1996). This chapter does not focus on individual volunteers as they are the focus of chapter 5. However, the composition of the groups, their membership composition and size and how the groups are managed is discussed. Whether the groups express any particular ethos or guidance principles is then considered before going on to look at the various activities that the groups carry out, how often the groups meet to undertake activities, and the way that these activities are funded. In order for the groups to

promote themselves, to encourage new members and to share and gather information, they use a variety of advertising and communication methods, including documents, publications and the internet. A number of groups within the study have links and associations with each other, and other organisations, and these are also considered. Finally four case study groups are used to illustrate different ways in which key group characteristics are combined in practise and how the groups have responded to real world challenges.

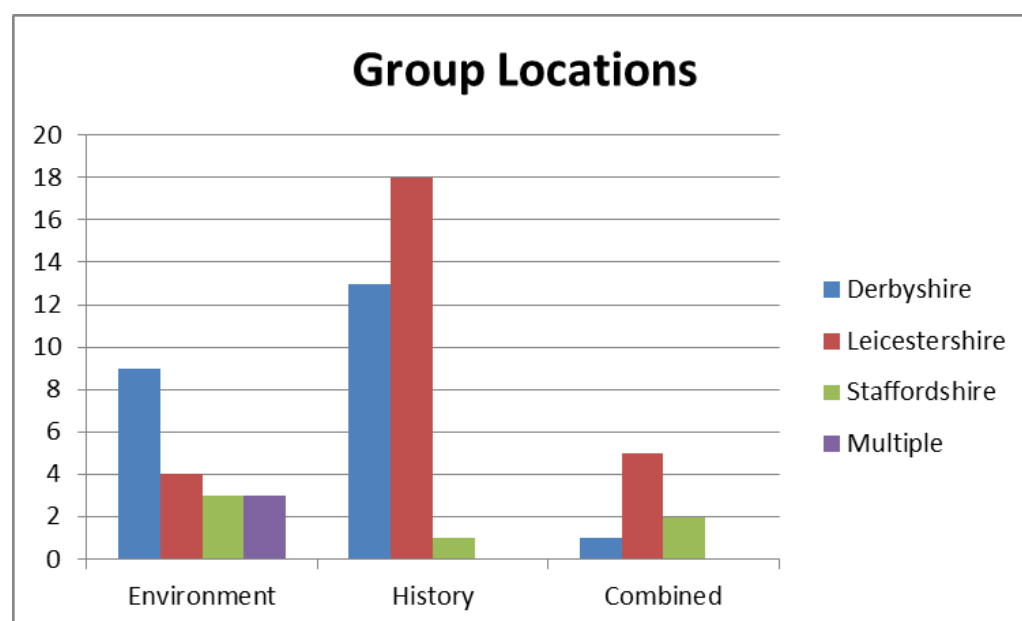
There were 59 local environmental and history groups identified in The National Forest using library, local leaflets and Internet searches (see Figure 3.2 in the Methodology Chapter for further details). The groups were categorised into groups with three main types of interest: environment, history and groups covering both topics. Some of the latter had a variety of different interests although these always included an obvious interest in both the local environment and local history. Groups classified as having environmental interests included those with a focus on conservation, natural history, general wildlife and specific wildlife e.g. insects, bats, birds, mammals. Groups classified as having local history interests included those with a focus on local history, archaeology, museums, industrial heritage e.g. steam engines, a furnace, family history and archives. Groups classified as having interests in both local history and the environment included those with a focus on specific areas and features e.g. a local park, canals, natural history and archaeology. Using these classifications, there were 33 historical interest groups, 19 environmental interest groups and seven groups which combined historical and environmental interests. During the study it also became apparent that some groups had more diverse interests than their names initially indicated¹⁰.

The National Forest area, which had a population of 187,000 in 1996, extends through parts of three counties and encompasses numerous

¹⁰ e.g. some groups originally classified as environmental groups also turned out to have historical interests, and vice versa

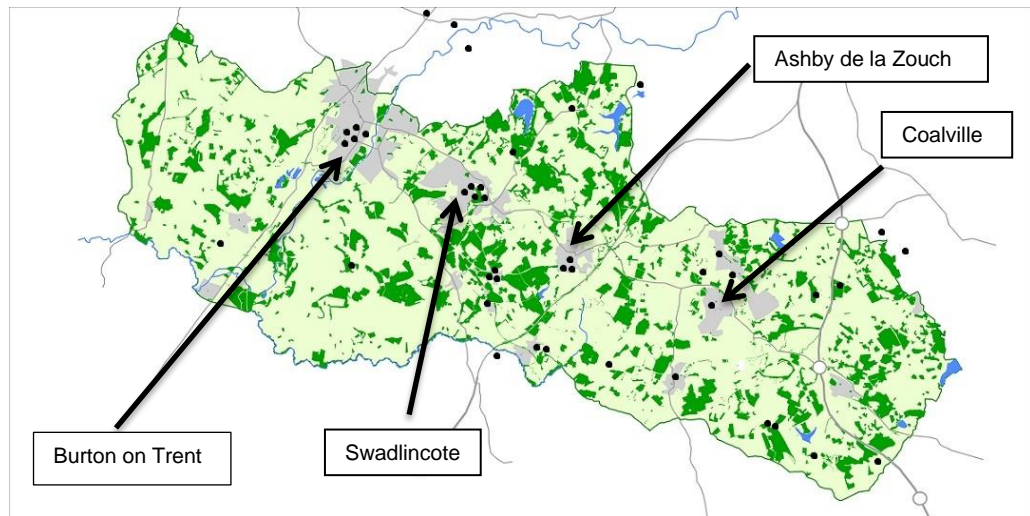
small villages and the towns of Burton-upon-Trent, Coalville, Swadlincote and Ashby-de-la-Zouch (Bell and Evans, 1997). In terms of county locations (see Figure 4.1), only six of the 59 groups are based in Staffordshire, although all types of group (environmental, historical and combined environmental and historical) are represented. There are 23 groups based in Derbyshire, made up of nine environmental groups, 13 historical interest groups and one group with both environmental and historical interests¹¹. The majority of the groups are based in Leicestershire, made up of 18 historical interest groups, four environmental groups and five groups with both historical and environmental interests. The majority of the environmental interest groups (10) are based in Derbyshire, with the majority of the historical interest groups (18) being based in Leicestershire. Three environmental groups cover more than one of these three counties.

Figure 4.1: Groups (County) Locations



¹¹ The Friends of Eureka Park were initially thought to be an environmental group, however it soon became apparent that the group did in fact have both environmental and historical interests and The Friends of Eureka Park were categorised as having both interests

**Figure 4.2: Group Locations on Map of The National Forest
(showing tree cover March 2011)**



(Source: Adapted from The National Forest Company Forest Cover Map, March 2011)

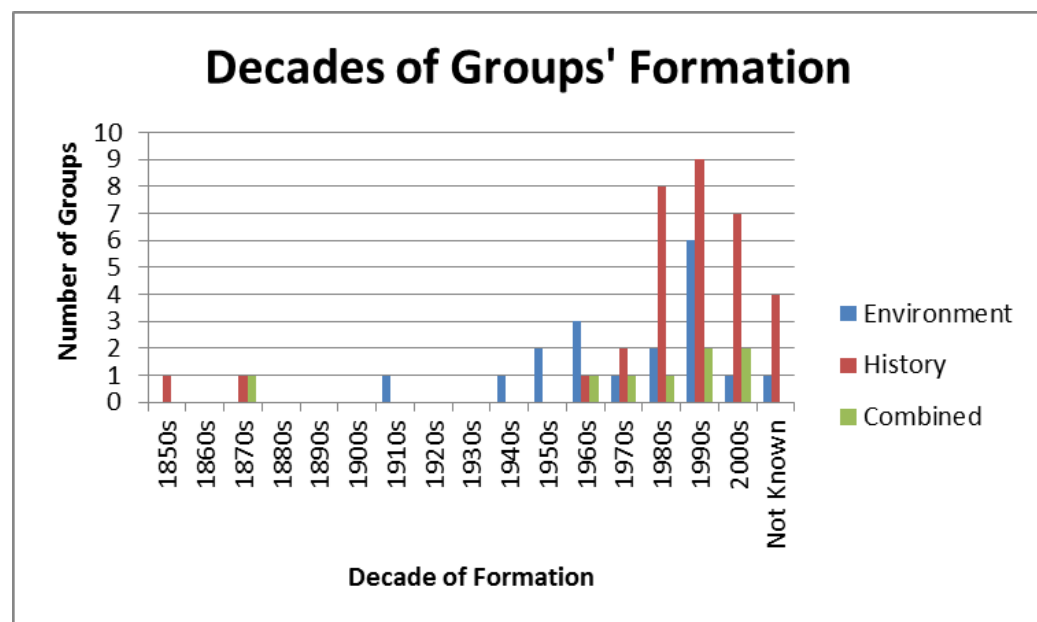
Figure 4.2 shows the locations of 42 of the groups studied, which are associated with particular locations. Approximately half (28) of the groups are based around hamlets, villages or towns for example, Ibstock Historical Society and Burton Conservation Volunteers. Both Burton-on-Trent and Swadlincote each have five (over eight per cent) of the groups based within them and Ashby de la Zouch and Moira both have three groups (over five per cent). 16 (over 25 per cent) are based around individual counties or county areas, for example South Derbyshire Badger Group and Staffordshire Bat Group. Six (almost 10 per cent) are based around a specific site of interest, such as Claymills Pumping Station or Eureka Park. Five groups (over eight per cent) are based around more than one county or a large region, such as the Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society, Butterfly Conservation – East Midlands Branch and the Burton and South Derbyshire RSPB Group. Four groups (over six per cent) are based around other local regions, for example The National Forest and Charnwood. Conversely, some county-wide groups do admit to having gaps in their coverage, for example due to lack of members in particular

areas. In addition, some local groups actually cover areas wider than their name specifies, for example, Burton Conservation Volunteers work both outside of Burton and outside of Staffordshire and The National Forest (Interview, 2008). Further aspects of the groups' place relations are considered in chapter 6.

Group Formation

The foundation years of the local environmental and historical interest groups in this study have been grouped into decades and an overall picture of this is shown in Figure 4.3:

Figure 4.3: Decades of Groups' Formation



The formation of the environmental interest groups occurred over a long period of time from the early 1900s to 2000s¹², perhaps fitting somewhat with Samuel's (1994) idea of the continuous development through from natural history to nature conservation groups. None of the environmental interest groups investigated in the study were founded as early as the 1840s or 1850s, the time period during which most districts

¹² Although when the BTCV National Forest group was formed is unknown.

had natural history associations (Winter, 1996). However, the Burton Natural History and Archaeology Society (with both environmental and historical interest) did form in 1876. The Wildlife Trust began as The Society for the Promotion of Nature Reserves (SPNR) in 1912, with Wildlife Trust groups (which are now part of the Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts) considered in this study formed in 1959 (Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust), 1962 (Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, which includes the Derbyshire South local sub-group) and 1969 (Staffordshire Wildlife Trust, which includes the Burton and District local sub-group). The SPNR then changed its name to the Society for the Promotion of Nature Conservation (reflecting its broadening role) in 1976, and to the Royal Society for Nature Conservation (RSNC) in 1981, not becoming known as the Wildlife Trust until 1995 and then Royal Society of Wildlife Trusts from 2004 (Wildlife Trust, 2011).

In this study, the earliest of the purely environmental groups to be founded was the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society (DANES) in 1914. This was the period when county societies generally flourished (Beckett, 2007). The Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society followed in 1941. This coincided with increasing public concerns about conservation that led to various government landscape protection activities from the late 1940s (Potter, 1998). In comparison the national Society for the Protection of Birds formed much earlier in 1889 (RSPB, 2009), whereas the British Trust for Ornithology was established only the decade before, in the 1930s when Max Nicholson recognised the potential of co-operative bird watching to inform conservation, and began early surveys of Rooks and Herons (BTO, 2011). During the 1950s there was an increase in the number of nature reserves (Matless *et al*, 2010), during which time both the Derbyshire Ornithology Society and the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust formed, in 1954 and 1956 respectively. In the 1960s three (over fifteen per cent of) environmental groups considered in the study were founded: Butterfly Conservation – The East Midlands Branch in 1968, the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust in 1962 (with the South Derbyshire

local sub-group developing from this more recently in 1979) and Staffordshire Wildlife Trust (which includes Burton and District local sub-group for which the year of formation is unknown) coinciding with the period Butler (1998) highlights as having a growth in nature interests and participation.

The formation of environmental interest groups then continued during each of the following decades into the 2000s. In the 1970s, the Burton and South Derbyshire RSPB (Royal Society for the Protection of Birds) group formed¹³, during a period which has been highlighted as having an increase in prominence of nature conservation (Watkins, 2003) and pollution concerns (Seymour *et al*, 1997). The RSPB itself was set-up in the late Victorian era by a group of women in response to the destruction of thousands of birds to meet the demands for the fashionable plumes of the time (RSPB, 2009). In the 1980s, a decade characterised by increased community involvement in environmental conservation (Gittins, 1993) and an increase in environmental pressure groups (Winter, 1996), a further two of the environmental groups were founded. They were the Derbyshire Conservation Volunteers in the early 1980s and the Derbyshire Bat Group in 1984. There was a peak in numbers of environmental groups (in the study) founded in the 1990s, a period which Evans (1997) highlights as a time of united nature conservation movements common themes. Six (almost a third) of the environmental groups formed during this decade: The Burton Conservation Volunteers – initially set up through BTCV (British Trust for Conservation Volunteers) but now an independent group¹⁴ (1993), the Charnwood Sunday Group – linked to the Leicester and Rutland Wildlife Trust (1995), the Derbyshire Amphibian and Reptile Group (1990), Friends of Rosliston Wood (early 1990s), the South Derbyshire Badger Group (approximately 1990) and Staffordshire Bat Group (1990). BTCV, through which the Burton Conservation Volunteers was established, began as the Conservation Corps in the 1950s, expanded

¹³ Exact year of formation unknown

¹⁴ According to information provided in an interview (2008)

into practical tasks in nature reserves in the 1960s and became BTCV, an independent organisation in 1970, with the local group affiliation scheme beginning in 1971 (BTCV, 2010). The most recently formed environmental group in the study is the Derbyshire Mammal Group in 2004.

Local historical interest groups in this study began to form from the mid-nineteenth century onwards. Initial investigations indicated that the earliest of the historical interest groups to form was the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society in 1855, followed by the Derbyshire Archaeology Society in 1878. Therefore these two groups formed prior to the Victoria County Histories in 1899 (Beckett and Watkins, 2011). From the 1880s through to the 1950s, no new historical interest groups in the study area were founded. All other historical interest groups (not just those focusing on industrial archaeology) formed from the late 1960s onwards, with the 1960s being a time of an increased interest in heritage features (Samuel, 1994) and the development of industrial archaeology (Sheail, 2002). However it was after the initial development of industrial archaeology between the 1980s and 2000s when the majority of historical interest groups in the study were founded. It might have been expected for some of the local history groups to have developed earlier than this with de Groot (2009) highlighting that local history became a formalised discipline from the 1940s and 1950s. Samuel (1994) highlights a growth in numbers of local amenity societies in the 1960s which fits more with the patterns of group development found. Indeed, this industrial history society that was founded in 1969 during the early enthusiasm for industrial archaeology:

“This was in the 1960s... a time when industrial archaeology was in its early days and flourishing” (Interview 2, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

In the 1970s, the Whitwick Historical Group¹⁵ and the Leicestershire and Rutland Family History Group formed (1974). There then followed a period of three decades during which 24 of the 33 historical interest groups (over two-thirds) were founded. This began in the 1980s, with eight new groups emerging (over a fifth): Ashby Woulds Local History Group (1984), Friends of Ashby Museum (1982), Desford and District Local History Society (1982), Friends of Moira Furnace/Moira Furnace Trust¹⁶, Magic Attic (1987), Measham Village History Group (1988), Repton Village History Group (1981) and Swannington Heritage Trust (1984). At the same time Britain was suffering the decline of various industries, with the British Steel Corporation and Coal Board closing down. Hewison (1987: 97) suggests that in relation to such development: "... There is also a need to create the past that will substitute the erasures of the present". Therefore, related heritage industry museums and groups developed.

The peak in the development of historical interest groups took place in the 1990s with nine groups (just over a quarter) forming during this decade: the Charley Heritage Group (1999), the Friends of Charnwood Museum (1999), the Claymills Pumping Engines Trust (1993), the Measham Museum (1992), the South Derbyshire Local History Forum (1997), the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group (1999), the Thringston Archaeology and History Group (1998), the Willington History Group (1998) and Witan Archaeology (1997). Buchanan (2000) discusses industrial archaeology going through various successive stages from 1960 through to 1990, beginning with a large number of local associations. Interestingly, in the case of this study it is during the 1980s, 1990s and even 2000s that a large number of industrial archaeology orientated local history groups developed. The seven (over a fifth) local historical interest groups that formed in the 2000s were: Bagworth Historical Society (2001), Donisthorpe and District Local History Group (2001), Etwall and Burnaston Local History Society

¹⁵ Exact year of formation unknown

¹⁶ Exact year of formation unknown

(2001), Melbourne Historic Research Group (2000), Ratby Local History Group (2000), Friends of Sharpe's Pottery (2003) and, most recently, South Derbyshire Family History Group (2004). Indeed, De Groot (2009: 73) highlights the increase in genealogical interest over the last 30 years with genealogy turning into 'family history'.

Of the groups with both environmental and historical interests, the earliest to form was the Burton Natural History and Archaeology Society in 1876 although the Victoria County History Publication *A History of the County of Stafford: Volume 9: Burton-upon-Trent* reveals that the beginnings of this group were as early as 184:

"A Natural History Society was established in 1841, and the marquis of Anglesey agreed to be the patron, having been reassured that the society's aim was not speculative but merely 'to afford an hour's relaxation from the ordinary and monotonous routine of occupation incident to a provincial town'. (fn. 7) The main object was evidently to establish a museum, opened in High Street in 1842. (fn. 8) The society probably lapsed after the museum was closed in the 1860s, but it was revived in 1876 as the present Burton-upon-Trent Natural History and Archaeological Society. The society organizes lectures and excursions, and between 1899 and 1933 it published transactions. It also built up a collection of artefacts which formed the nucleus of the borough museum opened in 1915 (fn. 9)" (Tringham, 2003)

This is the earliest record found of any group in the study. This means that, one of the groups in this study is actually a precursor organisation tying in with the 1840s-1850s period which Winter (1996) identifies as when most districts had natural history associations. However, despite its long history, in 2007¹⁷ the Burton History and Archaeology Society lapsed once again and announced on its website (that is no longer present on the Internet in 2011) that it was folding due to a lack of

¹⁷ During the period of this study

active members to run the group. The formation of the seven other groups with both environmental and historical interests was spread out from the 1960s to the 2000s, with a small peak in the 1990s and 2000s: Ashby Canal Trust/Association (1966), Barton under Needwood Civic Society (1974), Swannington Heritage Trust (1984), Bagworth Forward Group (1991), Appleby Heritage and Environmental Movement (1992), The Friends of Eureka Park (2003) and Nanpantan Victorian Garden (2004).

The Burton Natural History and Archaeology Society is not the only group to have lapsed during the period of study, although out of all the groups in the study area which have been and gone its reign has been the longest (131 years). The South Derbyshire History Forum closed in the late 2000s, after over 10 years in existence, having helped to set up a number of village history groups. It was felt that it was no longer required since most villages now had their own local history group (Interview, 2008¹⁸). In somewhat different circumstances, rather than completely disappearing, the Friends of Moira Furnace was a volunteer group which was replaced by the council-led, Moira Furnace Museum Trust. The Moira Furnace Museum Trust took over the site in 1992 with a few of those who had been involved in the Friends of Moira Furnace moving across to the new group. The Moira Furnace Museum Trust was originally made up predominantly of councillors until the constitution was changed so that for every one councillor there would be three volunteer members. However many of the original volunteers had by then become involved in other things, such as allotments, and so not many joined the Trust (Interview, 2008).

In another case, the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society give the group's founding year on its website as 1914, although in an interview with a long-term volunteer for the group, it became

¹⁸ Some interview numbers will not be included in this chapter in order to protect anonymity

apparent that it was formed from two previously separate county branches:

“I know it has been going a number of years because originally it was the Derbyshire Entomological Society that I joined and then several years ago they amalgamated with the Nottinghamshire and became the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire” (Interview, 2007¹⁹)

This is not made clear in information about the group on its website which states, that, the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society was:

“... Formed in 1914 to promote and further interest in General Entomology and the study of all Land Arthropods, especially with regard to species in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire and adjacent counties. The formation of the Society led to the systematic collection of insect records from 1916 onwards” (Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society, 2010)

However, in a PowerPoint presentation put together by the Society they state that it was formed in 1914 to study insects in the county of Derbyshire and bordering counties and this was extended to include Nottinghamshire in 1998 (Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society, 2010). The reasons for the formation of the various environmental and historical interest groups are now discussed in further detail.

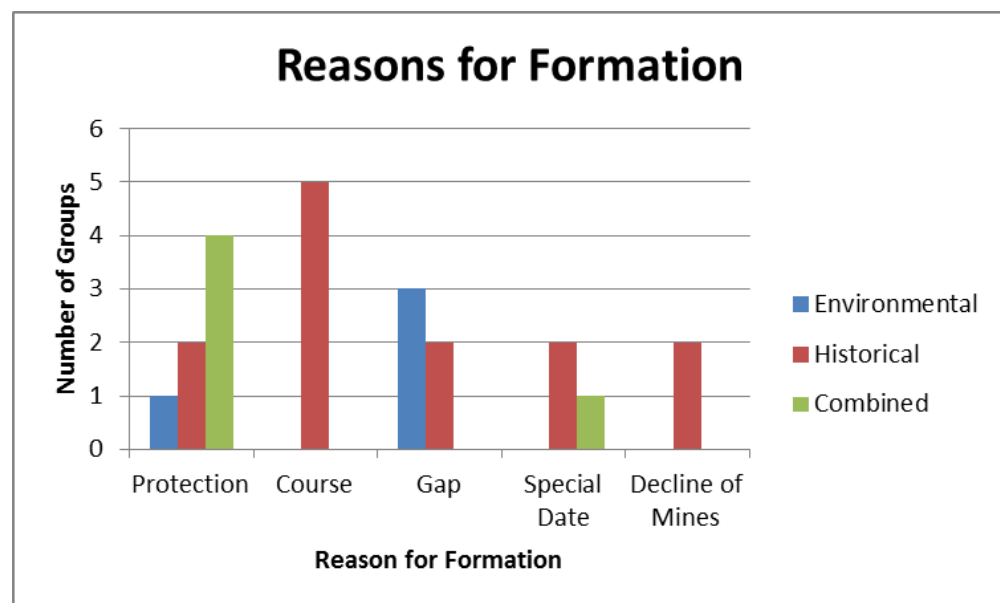
Reasons for Formation

The volunteers from the groups that were covered by the interviews were asked how long their group had been going and volunteers representing 22 of the groups went on to explain how and why their

¹⁹ Some interviewee details are not included in this chapter in order to protect anonymity

group had formed. It is apparent that there is a variety reasons for groups to forming (see Figure 4.4). The main reasons mentioned by the volunteers interviewed were: educational courses, protection of local areas, a special date or occasion (such as the Millennium), because a gap or need was identified, through the existence of another group or due to the decline of mining in the area.

Figure 4.4: Reasons for Group Formation



More groups in this study were found to have developed due to wanting to protect than for any other reason. Overall, seven groups formed because they wanted to protect something, and this motivation was most important amongst combined environmental and historical interest groups, four of which were established for this reason. The Friends of Eureka Park group formed to protect and improve the park:

“When I first went on to the park, soon after we came back, I was absolutely devastated when I saw the state of it - it was absolutely in terrible condition... We got to know two gentlemen who sort of got really involved with the park and the disgusting state it was in... So we

decided in 2003 to form the Friends of Eureka Park partnership between Friends of and the council..." (Interview, 2008)

So the Friends of Eureka Park set up in order to protect a place. However despite the group having an environmental focus it was discovered during the volunteer interviews that the group later went on to research the history of Eureka Park and produced a booklet on its findings (Interview, 2008). The Bagworth Forward Group formed in order to raise money to improve the local environment (Interview, 2008) and Appleby Heritage and Environmental Movement formed to protect and regenerate their area (Interview, 2004), with the focus being on 'preserving the best things in the village'. Finally Barton under Needwood Civic Society set up to protect the village from large housing development proposals (Interview, 2007):

"The group was formed initially to stop a lot of house building in the countryside because of all the developments coming the countryside was being eaten. They wanted a group to fight this and that was how the Civic Society was born" (Interview, 2007)

Three of the historical interest groups formed because they wanted to protect something. One group formed in order to protect local newspaper archives:

"The... office was going to move to smaller premises and the premises they were moving to would not have held these newspapers" (Interview, 2005)

In the case of these archives, the newspapers had to be physically 'rescued', taken away to be stored safely elsewhere:

"And it was organised that that morning there would about 30 of us in various sorts of vehicles, ranging from a five-ton firm's van... down to... people with trailers. And we formed a chain and lifted these papers

down. I believe that there was about nine or ten tonnes of it. And we lifted this, we formed a human chain, and the vehicles were pulling up outside the Mail office and they were being loaded up and then they lined up at the side of the road. And once all these papers were put in, we then moved in convoy up to the snooker club, where we had to take all the doors off so we could get it through and they were taken up all those stairs... ” (Interview, 2005)

This grouping that went on to become known as the Magic Attic started around a pub table and now attracts visitors from abroad and as far away as Canada and Australia (Interview, 2005). The Claymills Pumping Engine Trust, another history group, formed in order to save the Claymills Pumping Station, which was scheduled for demolition and it has been preserving and restoring the steam heritage site since (Interview, 2008). One of the environmental interest groups, the Derbyshire Amphibian and Reptile group, was also founded in order to protect something. It was initially established as an off-shoot of the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust to do toad patrols, to protect the local toad population (Interview, 2008), but is now an independent group. The group has also gone on to develop interests in reptiles as well as amphibians:

“Well, we are supported by the Wildlife Trust but not part of, we are part of the National Network of Amphibian and Reptile Groups that has been set up about 3-4 years ago. We are affiliated to them” (Interview, 2008)

The most popular reason mentioned for the formation of historical interest groups was following on from the attendance of a course. Trinder (2000) highlights the outcomes of historical and archaeological opportunities in adult education that include an educational publication of local research, setting up community research programmes and supporting conservation schemes. In the case of all five of the local history groups in the study that formed due to a course, it was as a result of founder members attending a history course. This town-based

local history group set up as a result of a number of people attending lectures together:

“We did a series of lectures in about 1984 and as a result of those six lectures, on the last evening we said, “Shall we set up a history society?” And we did...” (Interview 4, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Past-President)

Another historical interest group, this time a county-wide industrial history society, also set up after the founders attended a Workers Education Association (WEA) course on the development of transport in the area (Interview 2, 2004). The WEA formed in 1903, beginning as the Association to Promote the Higher Education of Working Men and becoming the WEA in 1905, and it is now the UK’s largest voluntary provider of adult education and a national charity (WEA 2011). Three of the volunteers told of their three (different) village history groups forming after courses: a night-school archaeology course (Interview 6, 2004), a local history course run by a local college (Interview 38, 2008) and a series of oral history events at a working men’s club (Interview 41, 2008). None of the environmental group volunteers mentioned that their group had formed due to attendance at a relevant course.

The most common reason for the foundation of environmental groups was due to there being a gap in coverage or a particular demand for a new group. Despite this, they nevertheless all formed in different ways. For example, the Burton Conservation Volunteers group set up after the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) held a meeting to encourage the establishment of local conservation groups (Interview, 2008):

“When BTCV were setting up new groups in the area 15 years ago I went to the first meeting to try it out and it just blossomed from there” (Interview, 2008)

The Friends of Rosliston Wood group was set up in the early 1990s as part of The National Forest activities in a partnership of local people and the Forestry Commission in order to support memorial tree planting at, what was, the Rosliston Farm site. The group also aimed to link up villagers with those developing the farm site into what would become the site of Rosliston Forestry Centre (Interview, 2008). The Friends of Rosliston Wood has now developed into a:

“Small group of volunteers that actually manage what has now become three separate memorial plots for the area” (Interview, 2008)

Rosliston Forestry Centre was initiated when the key local landowners, the Forestry Commission, South Derbyshire District Council and the Countryside Commission’s National Forest Development Team came together to develop a site for education, environment and recreation in the heart of The National Forest. The site is managed by a private management company, Aurora Country Developments, and the Friends of Rosliston Wood have a memorial wood, manage part of the site and organise planting sessions and conservation tasks (Green Space, 2010).

The Butterfly Conservation – East Midlands group formed as a regional group, evolving through local members of the national group (Interview, 2008). The East Midlands Branch of Butterfly Conservation covers Nottinghamshire, Leicestershire and Rutland and lowland Derbyshire. Two historical interest groups also formed due to there being a ‘gap’ in provision. The Repton Village History Group began with just a small group of people meeting in each other’s houses due to a mutual interest. Although Repton borders on the area covered by the Derbyshire Family History Society, the Repton Village History Group has a sole focus on the village history (Interview, 2005). Finally, the Derbyshire Family History Society formed via an existing group in order to fill a geographical gap and has since been successful in attracting a regular attendance:

“I’m doing the family tree and... I’ve set up a small group... a splinter group of the Derbyshire Family History Society... I was a member... and they had a gap in the area... so they approached me... So I said I would have a go and see what happened and well, we’ve been going a year last September. And we get thirty people, almost, a month”
(Interview, 2005)

Only one group with both historical and environmental interests and two groups with historical interests formed due to a specific date. None of the volunteers who stated that their group had formed due to a significant date or event came from environmental groups. For example, the Charley Heritage Group, a small local parish history group, formed in 2000 as a result of the Millennium:

“The Millennium I think about kicked it all off for everyone, you know, it was a land mark, or time when, we’d got to say right, it’d be good to mark this. It went from there. We recorded what was happening in 2000 and from that we’ve gone back” (Interview, 2007)

So, the Millennium was a prompt for one local group formation and activities. The two other groups which formed due to specific dates were, however, not due to the Millennium. In the case of the Willington History Group (a village group):

“It all began when it was the centenary of lifting of the tolls on the toll bridge that was between the two villages Repton and Willington... The organising committee for the celebrations decided to carry on as a local history group” (Interview, 2008)

The building of the toll bridge between Willington and Repton took place in 1839 along with the installation of a railway at Willington, and the toll charges remained in place until 1898 when the charge was removed (Repton Village History Group, 2011). The third group to have formed

due to a significant local date was the Swannington Heritage Trust which formed in 1982 due to it being the 150th anniversary since the arrival of the railways in Swannington. Despite the name, the Swannington Heritage Trust is a group with both environmental and historical interests.

Another reason for the formation of historical interest groups, mentioned by two volunteers, was the decline of the mining industry. The 'mining village' has been described as an:

"Occupational village dependent upon mineral extraction... Systematically dismantled by UK Governments in the 1980s... [With] Severe socio-economic difficulties... Celebrated community culture, attracting determinedly sensible nostalgia..." (Matless, 2004: 163)

Due to the dramatic downsizing of the coal industry in the 1980s there were concerns about rapid closures and the disappearance of relevant archival and archaeology records (Falconer, 2000). This initiated the formation of the Friends of Moira Furnace (now closed) group in the 1980s:

"At the time, which was the middle 80s, we was suffering a mining decline. I could see that unless we did something fairly rapidly and made the most of what we'd got then we'd have nothing. And the only thing we'd got was the Moira Furnace... so we instigated a Friend's society" (Interview, 2008)

The South Derbyshire Writers Group, which according to the volunteer below may have developed into the Mining Preservation Society in 1995,²⁰ also aimed to preserve aspects of the region's mining history, despite forming a decade later in 1994:

²⁰ Although other information seems to show there was an overlap in the existence of the two groups.

“I decided to start a writers group, we had, what, several months a year as a writers group but then we decided that because ours was a mining area we decided that we ought to before it was all gone and before all the people were gone we ought to interview them and find what life was like” (Interview, 2008)

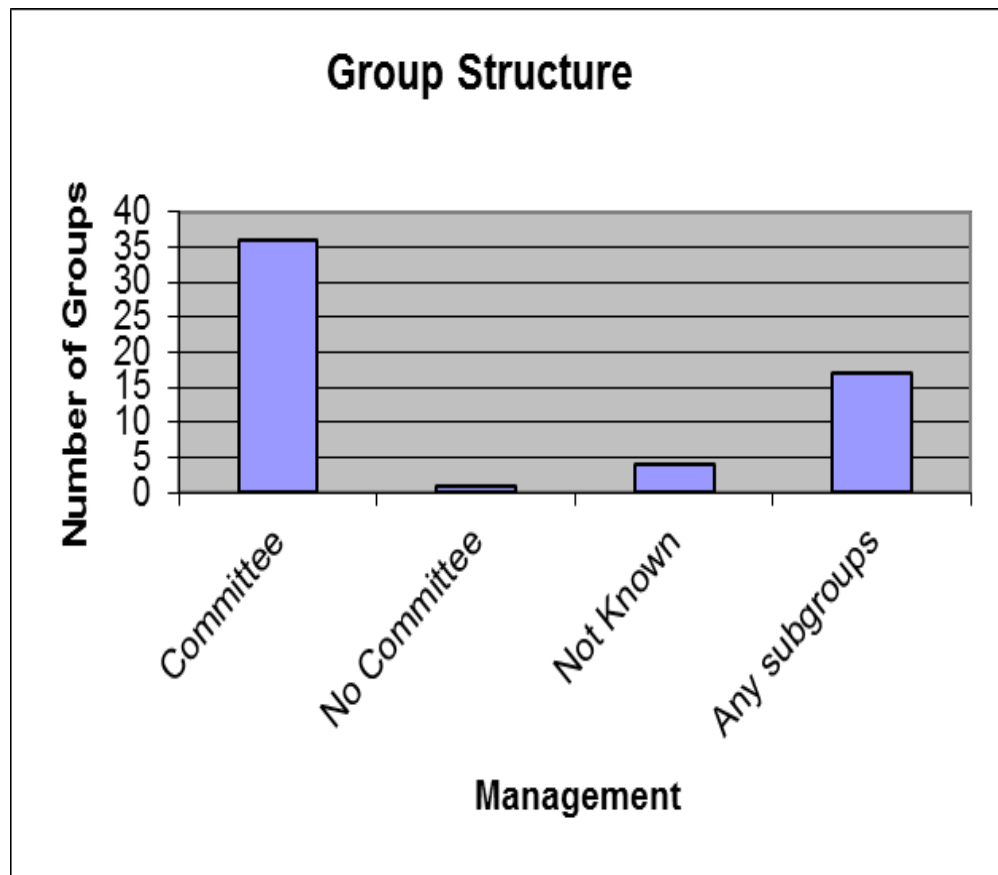
The Mining Preservation Society started off by interviewing a number of people who had personal experiences of the mines and went on to produce a CD and two books using the information gathered through these interviews (Interview, 2008). Group composition is discussed further in the next section of this chapter.

Group Composition

This section considers how the groups are organised and the nature of their membership. Thirty-six of 37 groups which had their management structure discussed in the interviews have a committee management structure in place and in one does not. It was not known whether four of the groups had a committee in place or not (See Figure 4.5). Seventeen of the groups either have sub-groups within their group or originated as a sub-group. For example, the Derbyshire Archaeological Society states on its website that it has the following sub-groups:

- Archaeological Research Group
- Local History Section
- Industrial Archaeology Section
- Architectural Section
- Council of British Archaeology

Figure 4.5: Groups' Management Structures



The South Derbyshire Family History group was the only one for which volunteers stated their group did not have any sort of committee structure:

“Our little group, there is just a team of us... we don’t get official. We’ve got no titles... we don’t bother with all of that, we keep it very informal. We don’t want to get too heavy... so we all muck in” (Interview, 2005)

In the other groups, which involve a committee structure, the committee positions mentioned always included, as one Museum group committee member said:

“... The usual officers, the chairman, the vice-chairman, a secretary and a treasurer...” (Interview, 2004)

Some groups mentioned odd additional roles, often to do with publicity and events, such as the South Derbyshire History Forum which, when the group was running, had an Exhibitions Organiser (Interview, 2008).

The Staffordshire Bat Group also has a publicity officer role:

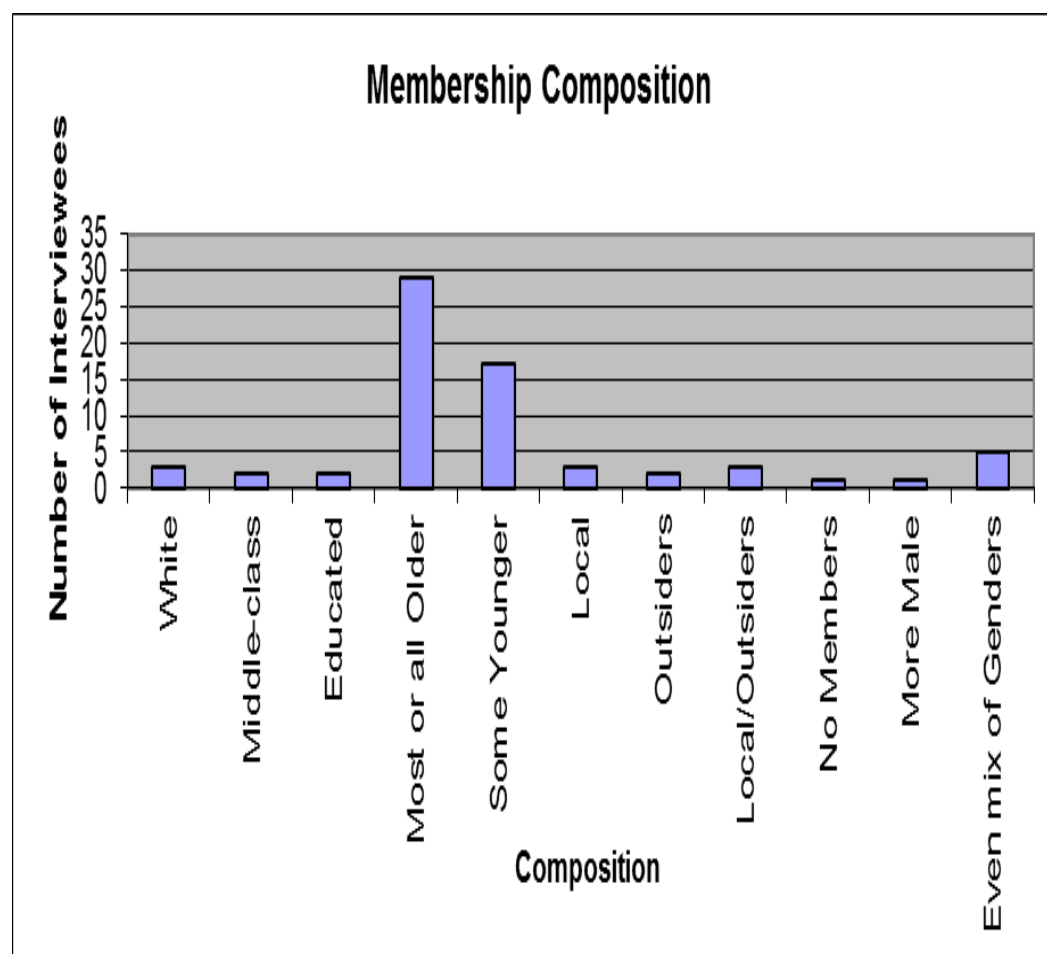
“There is a Publicity Officer role in the group. Now when I did that... I printed off leaflets and posters and put them in libraries, visitor centres...” (Interview, 2008)

The Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Group, more unusually, has a number of additional roles, including Editor of the magazine, Publicity and Exhibitions, Meeting Secretary, Librarian, Photographic Librarian and various Trustees and Auditors (Interview, 2007).

In terms of membership composition (see Figure 4.6), the most common comments concern the age of members, with 29 of the groups saying that their membership was made up completely or predominantly of older people. These members were generally referred to as middle-aged and older, retired or ageing. For example, this Leicestershire Industrial History Society volunteer tells how the original members were in their forties and fifties when the group started (which was in 1969):

“In the main, people [are] in their late fifties and so forth. A lot of us that are there are the originals, started off in our forties or fifties and are now silver-haired geniuses as they call us sometimes [laughs]” (Interview, 2004)

Figure 4.6: Membership Composition



Seventeen groups included volunteers who mentioned younger people being involved in their group's activities, even if in small numbers. These groups included six historical interest groups, nine environmental groups and two groups with both environmental and historical interests. For example, Leicestershire Industrial History Society has become involved with younger volunteers through a local scouts group. Interestingly, while the group is a history group, the younger volunteers have become involved in environmental-conservation activities through the local history group another group showing diverging interests: ²¹

²¹ The group was identified as a historical interest group

“We had a group of scouts start this morning and they are doing the work on the gorse field... scrub clearing, that sort of thing... they come and camp... we let them camp” (Interview, 2004)

In contrast, the Claymills Pumping Engines Trust, based in the town of Burton-on-Trent holds private ‘steamings’ for schools and groups and has volunteers of a range of ages involved directly with the group’s main activities (see Figure 4.7), including some very young volunteers:

“The youngest person who wanted to join is a four-year old girl so she happily joined and she comes to every steaming... the oldest member we had has just died and he was 102...” (Interview, 2008)

Figure 4.7: An Older Volunteer at a Claymills Pumping Engine Trust Steaming Event in March 2008

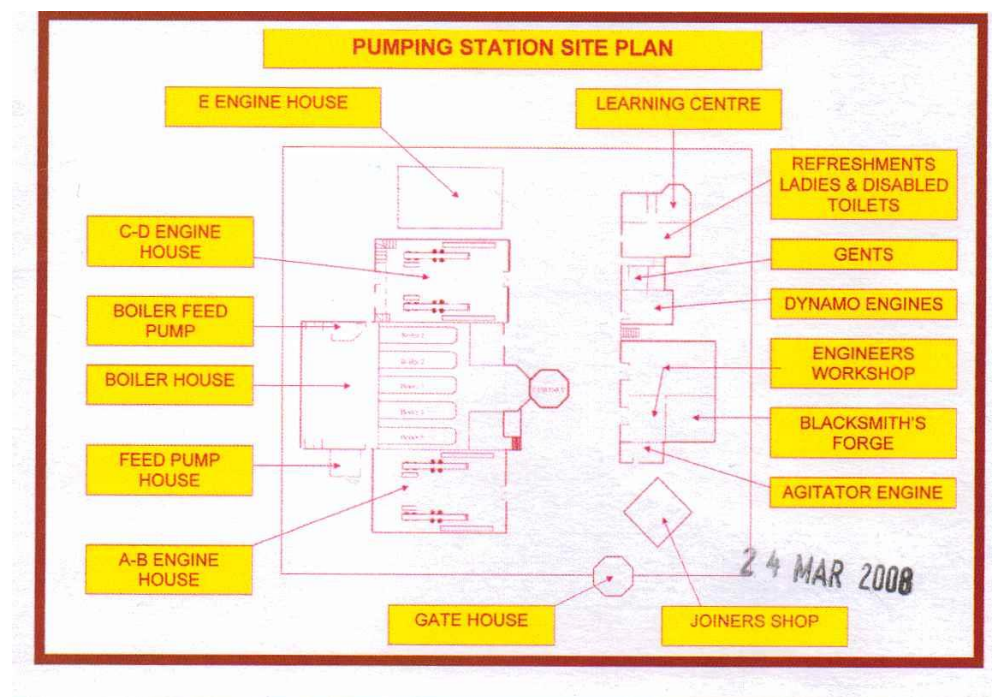


(Source: Towns, 2008)

The Claymills Pumping Station was built in 1866 in order to deal with sewage issues in Burton-on-Trent by pumping effluent from the sedimentation tanks to a sewage farm 2¼ miles away (Claymills, 2011).

It is made up of: an E Engine House, a C-D Engine House, a Boiler Feed pump, a Boiler House, a Feed Pump House, an A-B Engine House, a gate house, a Learning Centre (since 2004), a refreshments room with toilets, Dynamo Engines, an Engineers Workshop, a Blacksmiths Forge, an Agitator Engine and Joiners Shop (see Figure 4.8).

Figure 4.8: Site Plan of Claymills Pumping



Those groups with mainly or all older volunteers expressed concerns about the lack of involvement from younger people. Amongst those concerned about their ageing membership are the Magic Attic group, which plans to take a more active approach to encourage ‘younger’ people – those in their forties – to get more involved in order to sustain the group:

“We’ve got to start asking younger people, actively, younger people who come in on a regular basis, collaring them. But we need about half a dozen... if we don’t get younger people in, it will fold, but come as it may, it’ll work out... my son, he’s like me, he’s interested in local history

but when you are in your twenties you don't want to be stuck in here, you want to wait until you are in your forties before you get involved in this" (Interview, 2005)

One of the key concerns of groups struggling to get more new or younger volunteers is that at some point the current volunteers will no longer be able to carry on running the groups. The Friends of Eureka Park are focused on a particular park in Swadlincote and have not been able to recruit any more active volunteers since the group was founded:

"Anybody, we have been open to anybody... but we have not been successful... as far as our group is concerned, all I can see in the future is it folding. I see no real future" (Interview, 2008)

Although this member of the Friends of Eureka Park group was not optimistic about its future when I interviewed them in 2008, in a recent encounter in 2011 the group was still running and currently has some involvement in a (South Derbyshire District) council-led project to improve the park and investigate its 'invisible heritage' (Towns, 2011). Another Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society volunteer claimed that their group is getting older and less active:

"It's got slower and slower... its coverage is getting thinner and thinner, people get older and older, so it's a terrible business really, this aging" (Interview, 2004)

In relation to gender, six groups mentioned having an even mix of male and female volunteers: the South Derbyshire Family History Group (Interview, 2005 and Interview, 2008), the Charnwood Sunday – Conservation Group (Interview, 2006), the Staffordshire Bat Group (Interview, 2008), the Friends of Rosliston Wood (Interview, 2008), the Bagworth Forward Group (Interview, 2008) and the Donisthorpe and District and Local Group (Interview, 2008). Two volunteers said that their groups had an uneven gender ratio and two said there was a slight

difference. Volunteers from the Magic Attic said that they have more women volunteers, but an equal mix of male and female visitors (2 Interviews, 2005). In contrast, the Derbyshire Ornithological Group said that its volunteers were mostly male (Interview, 2008) and the Claymills Pumping Engine Trust said that it had slightly more men than women (Interview, 2008).

Sometimes the groups mentioned a gender bias that just occurred in certain areas of activity. For example, the Ashby Museum mentioned having more men on the committee for the group:

“Well we didn’t start by saying we’d have a certain type... funnily enough the committee has been heavily male... we are improving with another lady joining tonight” (Interview, 2004)

In contrast, another historical interest group, the Bagworth Historical Society, has an all women committee:

“The committee tends to be made up of five or six women, aged between forty to sixty...” (Interview, 2008)

In Mayerfeld Bell’s study (1994), men tended to be more involved in villages in the dirty outdoor work and rural women were often linked to the idea of an ‘organic community’, playing key roles in the community. Hughes (1997) also discusses the central role of women in the rural community and the way their lives are shaped by the constructions of rural life and gender roles. In two groups, Barton-under-Needwood Civic Society, and the Leicestershire Industrial History Society, there were references to the female volunteers providing food for the group or having an important involvement in food related social events:

“... A social evening and the ladies of the group are fantastic at bringing food.” (Interview, 2007)

“Every year for 23 years now we have had the Strawberry Fayre... A lot of the ladies find an active and positive role in organising...” (Interview, 2004)

Gender was also mentioned by volunteers from two local historical interest groups, where decisions have been made to actively make the groups more accessible to women volunteers. For example, the Magic Attic is open:

“... Monday nights, Thursday afternoons and Thursday evenings... The ladies were more able to come Thursday afternoons” (Interview, 2005)

In the case of the South Derbyshire Family History Society, a more local family history group was set up:

“... Because people didn’t like to travel, especially ladies on their own, and with the winter evenings” (Interview, 2005)

Traditionally rural, natural history pursuits (such as collecting) were characteristic of the middle classes (Thomas 1996) and two groups mentioned they had middle class volunteers. For example, in this museum group volunteers were described as:

“White, middle class, middle aged upwards, we’d love it to be different but that’s what [mentions place] is... We want to be inclusive... but in the end you get who comes in through the door and wants to help” (Interview 4, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Past-President)

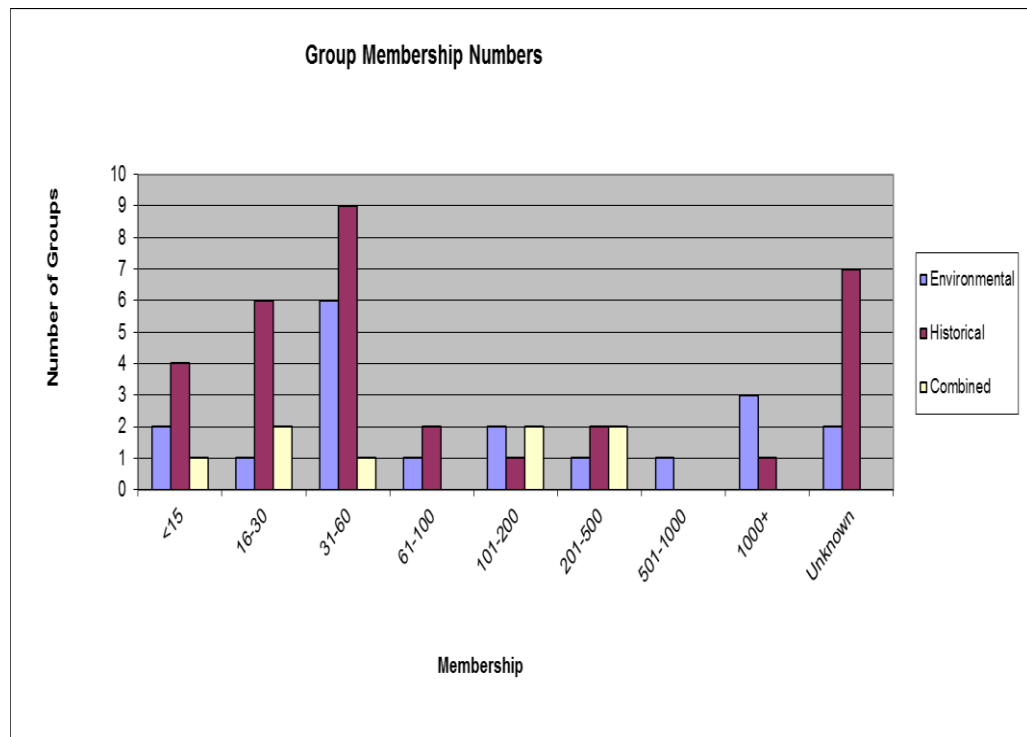
Others, such as the Claymills Pumping Engines Trust, stated that their volunteers were made up of people from a wide range of different backgrounds, although they did say they struggled to get volunteers from the local ethnic minority communities:

“... We’ve got males and females all with different intellectual backgrounds... totally different backgrounds, not just in terms of employment, in terms of income as well. None of it is a barrier to anything... the only people we’ve not been able to get hold of is ethnic minorities... we’ve got a very large ethnic minority population and we cannot get through to them” (Interview, 2008)

This may be related to the fact that people born outside the United Kingdom are less likely to volunteer (Rochester *et al*, 2010).

In terms of numbers, the most common group size is between 31-60 members, or volunteers (See Figure 4.9). However this does not always represent the number actively involved. Both historical and environmental interest groups vary in size significantly from under 15 to over 1000, with the size of groups with combined interests ranging from under 15 up to 201-500.

Figure 4.9: Group Sizes²²



The smallest groups are the Witan Archaeology Group, the Thringston Archaeology and History Group, and Friends of Eureka Park which at the time the study each only had only 5 members/volunteers remaining. The other groups with less than 15 members/volunteers are the Donisthorpe and District Local History Group, the Charnwood Sunday Group and the Charley Heritage Group, which all have 12 volunteers, and the Friends of Rosliston Wood which has 10 members. The largest groups are the county Wildlife Trusts (Leicestershire, Staffordshire and Derbyshire) and the Leicestershire and Rutland Family History Society, which each have several thousand members. However the Wildlife Trusts each encompass a number of smaller local Wildlife Trust groups, for example the Burton and District Local Group (part of the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust) and South Derbyshire Wildlife Trust Local Group (part of the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust), as discussed earlier.

²² Information taken predominantly from group documentation/websites, and interviews where this information was not available via documentation and websites

Research conducted in the East Midlands found many people to be members of conservation groups, but not necessarily actively involved (Bell *et al*, 2003). Choosing to be an active volunteer rather than only a member of a group usually involves a greater level of commitment, as stated by this active conservation volunteer:

“You’ve really got to be interested and want to do it and not so many people are really going to give up a whole day to do this sort of thing” (Interview 13, 2006: Female, Environmental Group Member)

Of the independent groups, the larger ones also include the Claymills Pumping Engine Trust, which has over 250 members of which 40 are reportedly active, the Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society which has 400 members, the Swannington Heritage Trust which has over 100 and The Burton Natural History and Archaeology Society which reportedly had 400 members before it folded in 2008.

Group Ethos

There were various attitudes and opinions mentioned in relation to the ethos of the groups (see Figure 4.10). The most common ethos expressed was in relation to being open, with volunteers representing six environmental groups, eight historical interest groups, and one environmental and historical interest group stating that their groups had an open attitude. For example, this historical interest group volunteer states that his group is, “Open to anyone that is interested” (Interview 25, 2008). Another volunteer from a historical interest group highlighted that, “Anyone can come” (Interview 27, 2008). This volunteer from an environmental group even goes on to give some examples of how it is open to new volunteers, for example through having an equal opportunities policy:

“Open to all... equal opportunities policy, no financial exclusion... we have had volunteers with learning difficulties, links with younger groups

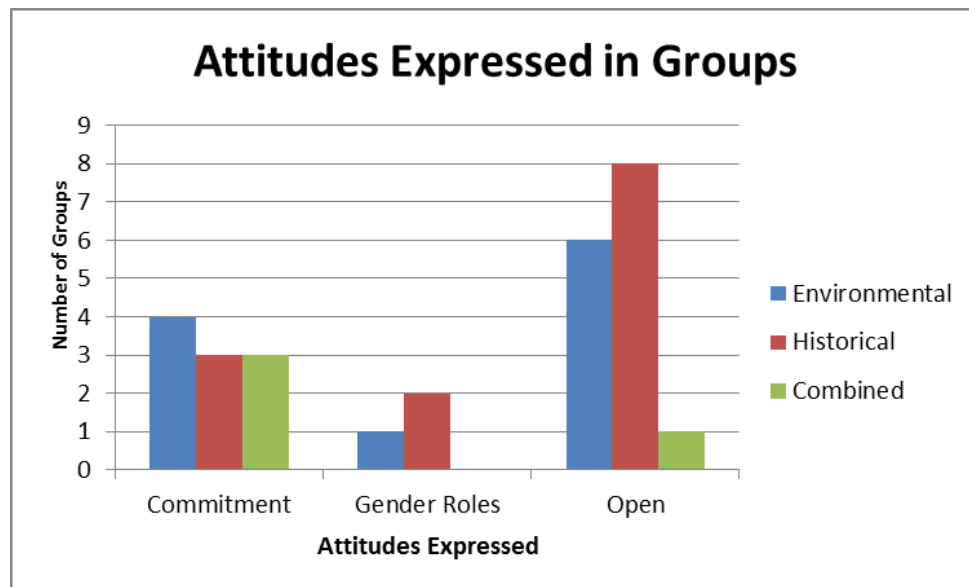
to keep younger interests...” (Interview 31, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Founder, Chair and Project Officer)

In the case of the Repton Village History group there has been a change in the group, as it has not always been open:

“Just met in each other’s front rooms and just collected materials, but did nothing with it. But there has been a change of plan over the last twelve months where we are now having open meetings where the public are asked to come in and we have speakers and we are making a lot of the material become available to Joe public as it should be” (Interview, 2005)

There were limits to openness nonetheless. The volunteer interviewed from the Derbyshire Ornithological Society makes the point that they would not welcome egg collectors (Interview, 2008) and the volunteer interviewed from the South Derbyshire Badger Group said the group would not welcome badger baiters (Interview, 2008). Obviously, not being an egg collector or a badger baiter is integral to becoming a volunteer for groups that promote the protection and monitoring of birds and badgers, which are illegal.

Figure 4.10: Attitudes



Volunteers representing ten of the groups referred to various attitudes towards or issues relating to commitment. Four of these groups were environmental groups, two were historical interest groups and three were groups with combined interests. For The Staffordshire Bat Group, in the past, there have been some issues with people taking up places on a bat course but not following it up with volunteering afterwards:

“For a number of years we have run training courses because a number of people have wanted to be involved in bat conservation. We’ve run a general introductory course on bats and follow it up with modules covering care and rehab work, survey work and opportunities to volunteer for English Nature. So, you know, we used to run a number of modules. Some were run at places like Staffordshire Uni, some were run down at Staffordshire Wildlife Trust. And that was a bit frustrating at times because we had an awful lot of people coming on the courses but not many of them would actively volunteer. They liked the idea of it but when the reality actually came to putting in the hours as it were as a volunteer, not many stuck through. I’d say there was something like a 90% drop out rate. So a lot of time invested in the training for a very little gain” (Interview, 2008)

The Staffordshire Bat Group was the only group to refer to commitment issues in this context. In the case of both the Derbyshire Ornithological Group and the Derbyshire Amphibian and Reptile Group, the commitment issues were to do with volunteers having a lack of time (Interview, 2008) and younger volunteers leaving once they went off to university (Interview, 2008). In the South Derbyshire Wildlife Trust local group, volunteers were described as split between those who are actively involved in conservation tasks, and those who just like to attend talks (Interview, 2007).

Moving on to consider the historical interest groups, in the case of the Friends of Moira Furnace, volunteers tended to have multiple interests which limited their availability and therefore commitment (Interview, 2008). The Charley Heritage Group is based in a small geographical area and has found that 'newcomers' are just not interested:

"Yes it's a very small area but very sparsely populated... the vast majority of people that now live in the area are now, what I call 'newcomers', well newish, and they move into the area to be remote and live what they consider as the country life... I think everyone is rather insular... that's well, what they come for. They tuck themselves away... we would like to get younger people interested, but hey, erm, and there's not that many youngsters about in the Parish and erm, the other people that live in the Parish are mostly newcomers and not really interested. It's a bit difficult" (Interview, 2007)

This ties in with suggestions by Hughes (1997) that belonging to a rural community means joining in with village activities, Halfacree's (1995) comments about middle-class incomers treating the rural villages they move to more as a 'dormitory' and Crang (1995) also suggesting that 'newcomers' tend to be 'elsewhere dominated' and involved with activities further away. However, interestingly when looking at the Appleby Heritage and Environmental Movement (also with both

environmental and historical interests) the opposite is the case with 'newcomers' running the group and local people being suspicious:

"They had a fairly important effect on the village. But the thing I want to stress about this is the original [group] members were all 'incomers'... This is a very significant fact... you've got this moving in of... well educated... relatively high earning people... with greater ability to effect public policy than indigenous villagers..." (Interview, 2004)

This example is more in keeping with the findings of Mayerfeld Bell (1994) who found that working-class villages are often suspicious of, and avoid participation in, events arranged by 'moneyed' villagers. Indeed it appears that the Appleby Heritage and Environmental Movement was both set up and continues to be made up of 'moneyed' incomers. In the case of the Friends of Eureka Park, a group with combined interests, the group previously had a paying membership who were happy to pay the membership fee but did not want to get actively involved, however the group is now just made up of the active committee members (Interview, 2008), and finally, like the Friends of Eureka Park, Swannington Heritage Trust also found that people are happy to give donations but do not want to be actively involved (Interview, 2008). This links in with the findings of Bell et al (2003) with not all conservation group members necessarily being active, as discussed in Chapter 2.

Volunteers representing two historical interest groups and one environmental group commented on gender roles in relation to group ethos (discussed in more detail in the previous section on Group Composition). Other attitudes expressed were individual to specific groups rather than following any overall theme. For example, the Measham Museum volunteers have acquired a feeling of satisfaction by gaining outside recognition:

“It is satisfying to be a sort of, part of something that the community seems to really appreciate and we have had several awards, county heritage awards, and also national awards for the education side of, of the work. And that is quite ego boosting for the people who are involved and because, I think, with communities like this, you quite often have people with a lot of talent who, don’t really think that they have until they are actually appreciated by some outside agency, and, and, so I think, so it has been quite sort of moral boosting for quite a few people”
(Interview, 2004)

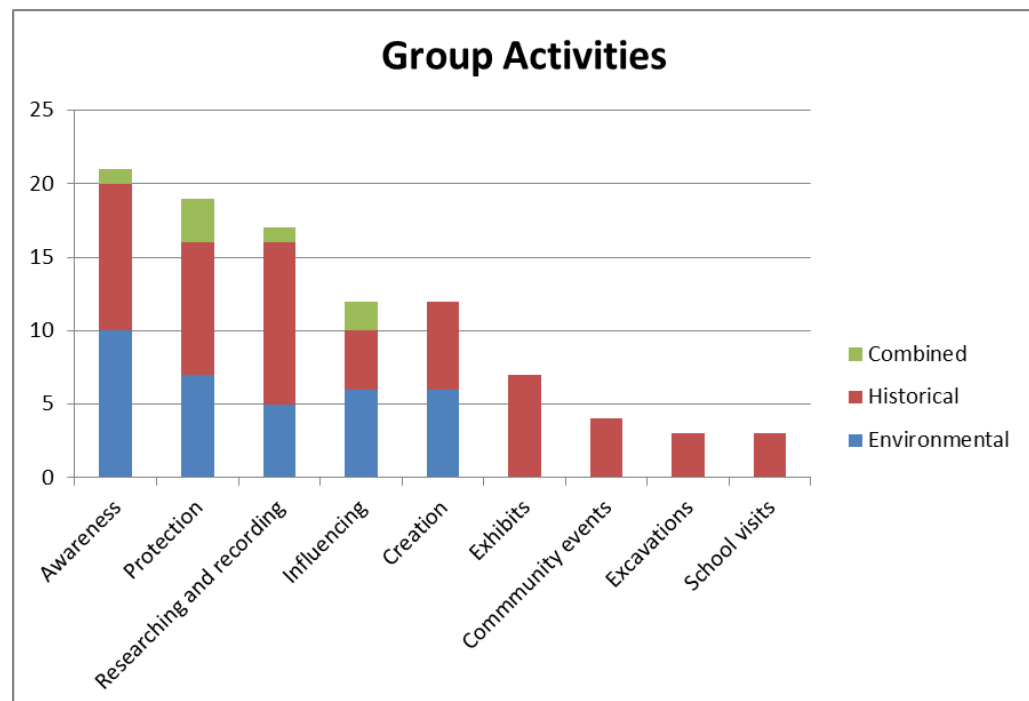
In the Thringston Archaeology and History Group, there is a general attitude of volunteers expressing what they want to gain from the group, what they have to offer and sharing their skills with other volunteers (Interview, 2004). Finally, a volunteer from a historical group expressed feelings of suspicion regarding those that might take advantage of the group, whilst retaining the trust of the local community (Interview, 2005). This can be considered in relation to Lawrence (2010)’s discussion on perceived threats when other organisations become involved in managing new data. The relationships between amateurs and experts are discussed further in chapter 5 and relationships between the groups and The National Forest, which can be considered both as a place and organisation, are discussed further in chapter 6.

Group Activities and Funding

This section first considers the range of activities undertaken by the volunteer groups (see Figure 4.11). The activities most frequently mentioned by the volunteers interviewed were raising awareness (21 groups), protecting (19 groups) and researching and recording (17 groups), followed by influencing (12 groups), creating (12 groups), exhibiting (seven groups), community events (four groups), excavating (three groups) and school visits (three groups). The most popular activities mentioned by historical interest group volunteers were researching and recording (11 groups), increasing awareness (10

groups) and protection (nine groups). The activities most frequently mentioned by environmental interest group volunteers were increasing awareness (10 groups), protection (seven groups), creation, for example of new local features such as woodlands, memorial gardens and Millennium stones (six groups) and influencing, for example in relation to planning applications and changing the views of the general public (six groups). Amongst groups with combined environmental and historical interests, protection (three groups) influencing (two groups) were the most common responses.

Figure 4.11: Group Activities



In relation to Rochester *et al*'s (2010) typology of volunteering activities, the groups involved in increasing awareness can be considered to be involved in the 'promotion of knowledge'. It was suggested in chapter 2 that the promotion of knowledge could also be linked to Davis Smith's (2000) mutual aid or self-help volunteering type. The Derbyshire Archaeology Society is involved in increasing awareness and sharing information through producing a journal and magazine. Another

example of a historical interest group sharing information through events and displays is the Friends of Ashby Museum:

“Well I suppose the whole of the museum is interpretation really, and that is in our actual charter or mission statement, that we are not only here to conserve... and to display, but we are here to interpret. So every year we have a temporary exhibition... Right from the start we have published about seven or eight booklets, one book and we even help others, other people, we, we sponsored one on Appleby Magna, a village about eight miles away, yes that was, once again, not written into the mission statement, but we have done that. We opened in 1982, our first booklet came out in 1983... we have got our publications, for ISBN, yep” (Interview, 2004)

This is an example of a historical interest group providing an interactional space informing visitors about local history ties in with Crang’s (1995) comments about people developing an understanding of the past through interactional spaces. Examples of environmental interest groups involved in increasing awareness are the Staffordshire Bat Group and the RSPB Burton and South Derbyshire Local Group. The Staffordshire Bat group states that it “formed in 1990 to increase knowledge, understanding and appreciation of bats in Staffordshire and the UK” (Staffordshire Bat Group, 2011) and the RSPB Burton and South Derbyshire Local Group aims to introduce members of the public to all aspects of Flora and Fauna, as well as to supporting the RSPB in their conservation work (RSPB Burton and South Derbyshire Local Group, 2012). These examples are relevant to Gooch’s (2002) research highlighting how environmental group volunteering can result in a deeper environmental understanding. The Swannington Heritage Trust, a group with combined interests, states that “We make our sites and historical information available to everyone and we are keen to work with village people and organisations for the benefit of all” (Swanning Heritage Trust, 2012).

Protecting can be considered in relation to either or both of two of Davis Smith's (2000) volunteer types, mutual aid/self-help and philanthropy/services to others, however it does not clearly fit into any of Rochester *et al*'s (2010) volunteer activity types. In relation to 'protecting', examples include the South Derbyshire Badger Group and Charnwood Sunday Group (environmental interests) and the Magic Attic (historical interests). The South Derbyshire Badger Group is involved recording and helping injured badgers:

"Our main activities are our monthly meetings and walks, which we do all year around... We are called out to pick up road traffic accidents and keep a running total year on year... occasionally we get called out to injured ones, we take them to the vets" (Interview, 2008)

The Charnwood Sunday Group undertakes practical nature conservation tasks on the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust's nature reserves in the Charnwood area (Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, 2012). As highlighted by Goodwin (1998) participation in conservation programmes can lead to local environmental improvements. The Magic Attic groups founded in order to rescue papers from the Burton Mail archives which were going to be destroyed (see case study for further information).

Recording is an activity which clearly fits into the 'data collection' activity type specified by Rochester *et al* (2010), which I suggest in chapter 2 might be linked to Davis Smith's (2000) mutual aid and self-help volunteer type. An example of an environmental group involved in recording is the Staffordshire Bat Group, which is involved in bat surveys and training courses to help people become more involved in surveys:

"Then we have the survey side which is things like trying to ascertain what species are living in which areas. Or it could be surveys because of environmental building work and environmental impact work and

what impact that could have on the ecology in the area. So there is the whole survey side ... for a number of years we have run training courses because a number of people have wanted to be involved in bat conservation, we've run a general introductory course on bats and follow it up with modules covering care and rehab work, survey work and opportunities to volunteer for English Nature" (Interview, 2008)

So it can be seen that the Staffordshire Bat Group is involved in a number of different activities, both outdoor and indoor, including advice work linking in with English Nature (Natural England since 2008). Another environmental interest group involved in wildlife recording is the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society:

"It's recording information about all insects, I mean there are people who specialise in damselflies, dragonflies, people who specialise in, let me think now, hoverflies and that sort of thing so there are different people who specialise in lots of different areas... There are experts that they can contact through being with the group in particular fields within the society, there is a recorder for beetles, bugs, butterflies, diptera, dragonflies, fleas and ticks, macro moths, micro moths so I think they can get, not only going out on the walks or whatever, but to identify things there are a whole host of people they can contact... Most of them tend to survey their local patch. Again I would say that they do a lot of surveys in conjunction with... Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, or the RSPB or the ornithological societies, you very often find that one person who is doing a survey on a particular site is likely not only to be recording the insects, but they are also interested in the flowers or the birds or something like that" (Interview, 2007)

So in the case of the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Ornithological Society there a number of specialists carrying out detailed surveying and recording, and there are links with other organisations through these activities. Groups and volunteers involved in recording information on particular species can be considered in relation to the

work of Lawrence (2010). Lawrence (2010) found that such volunteers were motivated by good will and a sense of attachment to the particular species they were involved with. Volunteer motivations will be considered further in chapter 5. A historical interest group involved in recording information is the Magic Attic. For example, this volunteer describes a project they had just started when I visited the group in 2005:

“At the moment we’ve just started a new project and we’re scouring all the newspapers for the births, marriages and deaths right from the eighteen, well middle eighteen hundreds... well, we are hoping, each person has got their own year at the moment and then they will be in charge of their own year and put it up on the database... and that’s, that’s another resource for the area’s history” (Interview, 2005)

Other historical interest groups involved in recording also have archives and items to record the history of their local areas. The number of historical interest groups involved in recording found in this study can be considered an example of there are still plenty of opportunities for the amateur historian to contribute to the field of local history, as suggested by Hoskins (1959).

The main aims of the Barton-under-Needwood Civic Society are to “protect the environment, architecture and fabric of the village” (LANDshapes, 2006). Groups providing volunteers with opportunities to be involved in protecting local resources can be considered relevant to Buchecker *et al*’s (2003) research which shows that volunteering can provided opportunities to be involved in local decisions making and Davis Smith’s (2000) advocacy and campaigning or participation volunteer types. Indeed, a volunteer from the Barton under Needwood Civic Society states that:

“We always comment on planning matters, anything to do with the environment” (Interview, 2007)

The South Derbyshire Badger Group is also involved in influencing:

“If developments are scheduled on an area where we know badgers are present then we always contact the developer” (Interview, 2008)

Therefore the above two groups are examples of how volunteers can be involved in both the protection and influencing of the local area.

The Charley Heritage Group is an example of volunteers involved with creating, for example they have produced a Millennium Map for the Parish and more recently a book (discussed further in the Charley Heritage Group case study). An environmental group involved in creating is the Friends of Rosliston Wood, who have created three memorial woods. Ashby Museum and the Magic Attic are both examples of groups which produce exhibitions, both inside their venues and at other locations for particular events (Interviews, 2004), for example the Magic Attic regularly holds an exhibition at Swadlincote’s annual Festival of Leisure. Other groups actually hold their own community events. Before the group closed, the Friends of Moira Furnace held a steam fayre community event (Interview, 2008) and the Bagworth Forward Group run the annual craft vegetable and flower show (Interview, 2008). The Derbyshire Archaeology Society is an example of a group involved in excavations, running trips and small archaeological digs (Interview, 2008). The Magic Attic (Interview, 2004) and South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group (Interview, 2008) are example of groups which regularly host school visits. Rochester *et al*’s (2010) volunteer activity types include community activities, promotion of knowledge and culture which may be considered relevant to the above activities.

Volunteers from sixteen groups referred to carrying out indoor activities, made up of nine of these being historical interest groups, six environmental groups and one group with combined interests. For

example, the volunteers from Measham Museum are involved in the indoor activities of running the museum and other archiving activities (Interview, 2004). Volunteers from twenty-one groups referred to their groups being involved in outdoor activities, with 11 of these groups being historical, eight environmental and two with combined interests. For example, the Staffordshire Bat Group is involved in bat surveys and conservation activities (Interview, 2008). One historical interest group which takes part in outdoor activities is the Derbyshire Archaeology Society, which runs walks and archaeological digs (Interview, 2008). The Swannington Heritage Trust is a group with combined environmental and historical interest. Its activities involve maintain former mining and railway sites a mill and 10 acres of woodland (Swanning Heritage Trust, 2012). The involvement of groups in outdoor activities can be particularly significant to local places as their activities are more visible to the general public and generally more likely to present obvious changes and influence on local places.

In the next section I consider the frequency of activities (how often members of the group meet to take part in activities) undertaken by the groups (see Figure 4.12). One to four months is the most popular frequency for historical interest groups to meet, and every three to four weeks for most environmental interest groups. The environmental groups cover a wider range of meeting frequencies. The historical interest groups meet at least every four months, or more frequently, with four groups meeting every three to four weeks and three groups meeting more than once a week.

Due to the popularity of the facilities and services offered by the Magic Attic group, a newspaper archives group based in Swadlincote (South Derbyshire) now opens its premises several times per week (see Figure 4.13, discussed further in Magic Attic case study):

“We open up the premises to the public for fourteen hours a week... everybody does it voluntary...” (Interview, 2005)

Figure 4.12: Frequency of Group Meetings

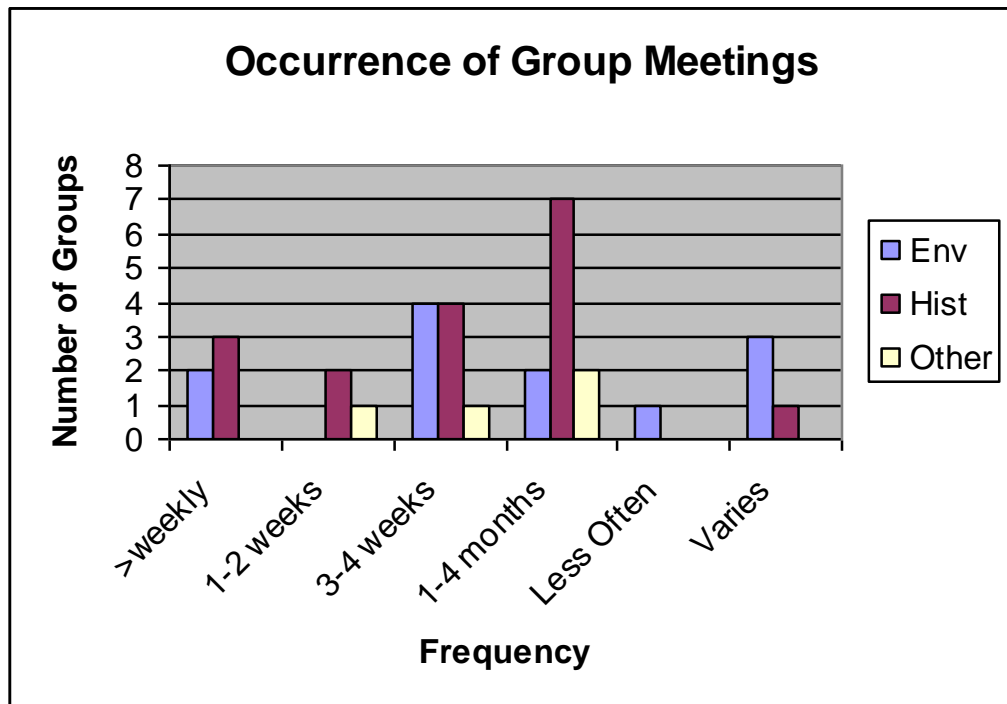


Figure 4.13: Entrance to the Magic Attic



(Source: Towns, 2011)

Some groups change the frequency of their meetings according to the time of year. For example, two of the environmental interest groups meet less frequently in the summer. The Derbyshire and Entomological Group tends not to meet in the summer months as the members are too busy surveying the insects and are more likely to correspond by email (Interview, 2007). Likewise the Staffordshire Bat Group meets every six weeks in the winter, but rarely in the summer as the members are busy out recording wildlife (Interview, 2008). This was also the case for one of the historical interest groups. The Charley Heritage Group meets less frequently in the summer months as members are too busy with other commitments (for example farming) (Interview, 2007). Similarly, for one of the groups with both environmental and historical interests, the Barton under Needwood Civic Society:

“There are no meetings in July and August, but ... well we’ve always had for many, many years a trip to a stately home or an interesting building, or a town, or somewhere...” (Interview, 2007)

In contrast The Friends of Eureka Park, a combined environmental and historical interest group, generally only meet in the summer (Interview, 2008). They were the only group that said they did this. None of the groups with both historical and environmental interests said that they changed their meeting frequency at different times of the year.

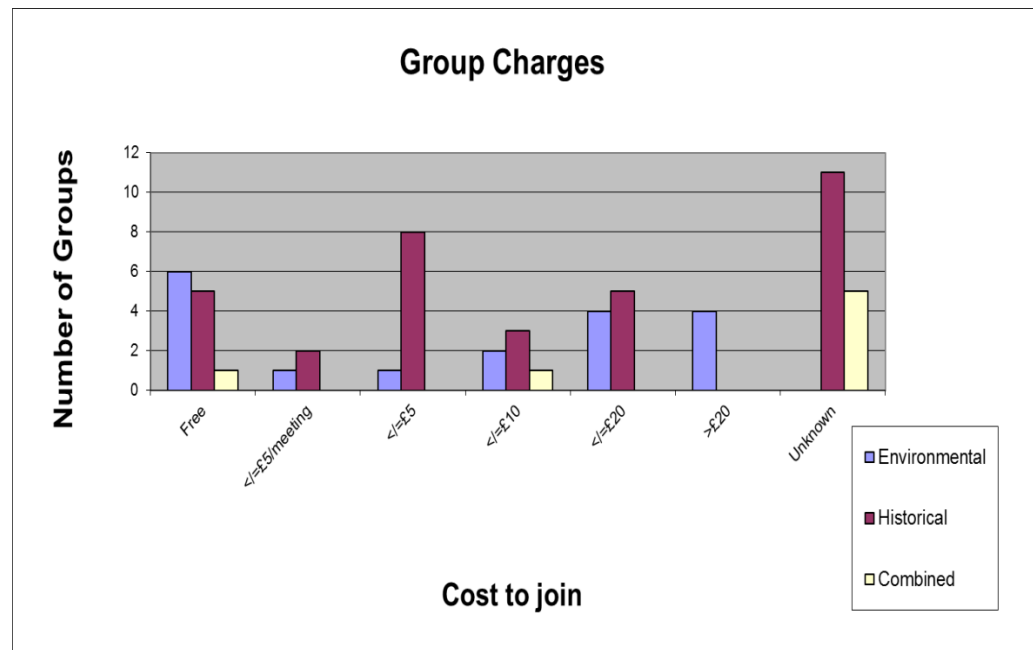
Two environmental groups and one historical interest group did, however, say that the locations of their meetings and activities change, with indoor meetings being held in the winter and outdoor trips and walks in the summer. These groups were the Burton and South Derbyshire RSPB Local Group, the Derbyshire Ornithological Society and the Derbyshire Archaeological Society. Three groups also mentioned that their meetings varied in frequency and/or type throughout the year. For example, Burton Conservation Volunteers meet at least once a week, frequently more often, with regular planning

meetings, conservation tasks and socials (Interview, 2008). The Swannington Heritage Trust sometimes has informal gatherings when members of the close-knit group just happen to 'bump into each other' (Interview, 2008) and the Claymills Pumping Engine Trust sometimes gets together on Saturdays for the people who are at work during the week (interview, 2008), perhaps indicating that some informal, additional and impulsive gatherings may occur in relation to these groups.

Membership costs also vary (see Figure 4.14) with some groups having free membership, or no cost to be a volunteer, up to membership costing £36.50, as with the Derbyshire Bat Group. Six of environmental groups are free. Most of the historical interest groups charge under £5. Additionally, in the case of some groups, anyone can come to a meeting for a one-off charge, even if they are not a regular 'member', for example; the RSPB (Burton and South Derbyshire Local Group), the South Derbyshire Local History Forum (when it was running) and Willington History Group. The Staffordshire Bat Group, Derbyshire Family History Society and Derbyshire Mammal Group all charge membership per family or household. The Claymills Pumping Engines Trust has an admission payment of £4 for visitors who wish to attend a steaming. For all other groups, for which membership fees are known, the charge is an annual fee.²³

²³ This information is unknown for sixteen of the groups.

Figure 4.14: Group Charges



The Charnwood Sunday Group, the Derbyshire Amphibian and Reptile Group and the Magic Attic do not charge at all, and the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group has some honorary members who have helped the group out, and do not pay a membership fee:

“I send out minutes to 56 every month, that is paid members, at £10 per year, or honorary members, like the chairman to the Gresley Old Hall... and the gentleman at the miner’s rescue company... because he allowed us to have the majority of the old rescue things from Ashby when it [the mine] closed” (Interview, 2008)

The Leicestershire Industrial History Society and the Magic Attic also raise funds through donations, although these are not always financial as this volunteer from The Magic Attic describes:

“I think we built a strong link within the community because people were bringing all kinds of things in, “Do you want this?” “Do you want that?” we had all sorts of people coming up to us. Some stuff was good, some stuff wasn’t and they’d say, “Well if you don’t want it, either throw it

away or sell it and put it in your box”, because we were running on a donations box” (Interview, 2005)

The Bagworth Forward Group raises funds for their village improvement activities from the village show that they run:

“We are a group of villagers who raise money to improve our environment... .. we run the annual show, which is the craft, vegetable and flower show, which is the main project...” (Interview, 2008)

Ashby and Measham Museums, and the Friends of Moira Furnace, all in Leicestershire, are supported financially via their local council, North-West Leicestershire District Council. Volunteers from the Leicestershire Industrial History Society, the Ticknall Preservation and History Group, the Friends of Eureka Park, the Swannington Heritage Trust and the Claymills Pumping Engine Trust all mentioned their groups receiving or applying for grants. For example, the Friends of Eureka Park have been successful in gaining a Heritage Lottery grant (see case study) and Swannington Heritage Trust gained £70,883 from the Heritage Lottery Fund which went towards the restoration of Hough Mill (Swanning Heritage Trust, 2012). Other groups raise funds by charging for their services, Burton Conservation Volunteers and the BTCV local groups charge for the conservation work that they carry out and the Derbyshire Ornithological Society get paid for carrying out surveys.

The Friends of Rosliston Wood Group has a more unusual funding strategy as it charges £30 for people to plant a tree. Conversely, the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group said that they do not have any income. In addition, out of the nine representatives that commented on their group status, The Leicestershire Industrial History Society, the Claymills Pumping Engines Trust, the Ashby Canal Association, the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society, the Derbyshire Family History Society and the Derbyshire Ornithological Society all referred to having charitable status and six

groups said that they were Trusts. The East Midlands Butterfly Conservation branch states it is part of the registered charity Butterfly Conservation.

Advertising and Communicating

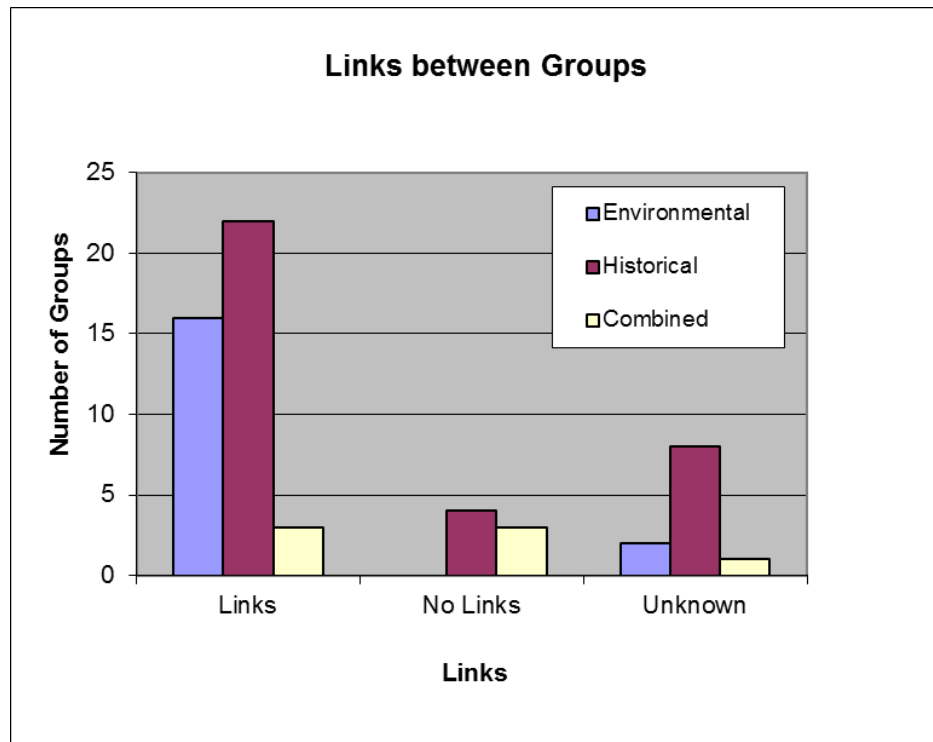
Links and Developments

In terms of interaction between the groups, the majority are linked to other groups or organisations in some way (see Figure 4.15), with volunteers from 22 of the local history groups, 16 environmental interest groups and three groups with combined environmental and historical interests mentioning links to other groups and other organisations.²⁴ All of the environmental groups (for which this information was known) said that they had links. Four local history groups and three groups with combined environmental and local history interests said that they did not have any links with other groups or organisations.²⁵ Links can either be through direct association or by loosely working together.

²⁴ This information was unknown for the groups which were not represented in the interviews and two of the groups for which a member was interviewed.

²⁵ Information about group links is unknown for eight local history groups, two environmental interest groups and one group with interests in local history and the environment.

Figure 4.15: Links between Groups



For example, the Staffordshire Bat Group is affiliated with the Bat Conservation Trust. The Bat Conservation Trust is an umbrella organisation that was formed in 1990 due to the rapidly growing network of bat groups (Bat Conservation Trust, 2010). The Derbyshire Amphibian and Reptile Group is part of the Amphibian and Reptile Groups of the UK (ARG UK). ARG UK represents a network of over 50 Amphibian and Reptile Groups based in England, Scotland and Wales (ARG UK, 2011).²⁶ Likewise, the Staffordshire Badger Group is part of the Badger Trust, which was set up in 1986 by 19 local badger groups who decided that there was a need for a national organisation to provide an effective and co-ordinated response to issues of concern (Badger Trust, 2011). These affiliations to national groups tend to be

²⁶ Through ARG UK it has since been discovered that there is also a Leicestershire Reptile and Amphibian Network and Staffordshire Amphibian and Reptile groups. These groups were however not included in the study and neither of them has a website.

more a feature of environmental than historical interest groups in the National Forest.

Four of the environmental interest groups (the Friends of Rosliston Wood, the South Derbyshire Wildlife Trust sub-group, the Derbyshire Amphibian and Reptile Group and the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society) also mention having links with Rosliston Forestry Centre, which is located in Derbyshire in The National Forest. It is made up of a partnership between the Forestry Commission, the National Forest Company, and South Derbyshire District Council (Rosliston Forestry Centre, 2011). In addition to thirteen groups in this study actively involved with The National Forest LANDshapes project and website, volunteers representing an three additional groups (Appleby Heritage and Environmental Movement, The South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Society and Swannington Heritage Trust) mentioned having some involvement with the LANDshapes project. A volunteer representing one other group, the Burton Conservation Volunteers) also mentioned having worked with The National Forest, through tree planting.

Fewer historical interest groups have national organisation affiliation. A notable exception is the Derbyshire Family History Society which is a member of the Federation of Family History Societies and is publishing some of its research material through the pay-per-view Family History Online web site created by the Federation. It also has links to various other family history and related websites. Other historical groups in the study had links with one another or had mutual links. The Measham Museum Group and the Friends of Ashby Museum are both involved with another, separate group, The Leicestershire and Rutland Museum Forum (2 Interviews, 2004), for example:

“I’m finding out museums...going on museum courses, which are run by the county council, the Museums Forum, I’ve sort of taken the museum

through the registration process, which was quite complicated... which you have to do if you want to go after various funding” (Interview, 2004)

The Museum Forum describes itself as providing members (museums in the two counties are run solely by volunteers) with access to a network of advice, shared experience and opportunities (Leicestershire and Rutland Museum Forum, 2010). By contrast, the only links Repton Village History Group had was through correspondence with other village history groups.

Working together can also benefit groups through the sharing of resources. For example the South Derbyshire Family History Group carried out research at the Magic Attic (Interview, 2005) and the Ticknall Preservation and History Group produces books which are sold in the Sharpe’s Pottery (Interview, 2008). The Friends of Eureka Park (a combined environmental and historical interest group) were even involved with the Magic Attic group when it carried out research in order to produce a booklet on the history of Eureka Park (Interview, 2008).

Some group links are with other organisations that are not specific to local historical and environmental interests. For example, local BTCV groups carry out tasks at the local Tara Buddhist Centre (Interview, 2008) and five of the groups mentioned working with local schools. Links can also be developed through the use of technology. The Magic Attic, a newspaper archives group, has started using computers to record findings and to help develop links with local schools (Interview, 2005), while the Friends of Ashby Museum has developed an education room (Interview, 2004). The Leicestershire Industrial History Society has had involvement with the local council and the National Coal Board:

“... We got a lot of encouragement from the local district and the County Council with the view to promoting tourism and interest. And then we were offered the opportunity, by the National Coal Board, first of all, of the nineteenth century coal site... Snibston number three colliery... we

created a little village museum in the local school, which was fascinating... and we cleared a lot of the sites... to make them accessible to people for the first time in forty odd years” (Interview, 2004)

In relation to links with The National Forest, only one group, the Friends of Rosliston Wood was set up with some involvement from The National Forest. However, all of the groups are located in, or operate within, the area of The National Forest and therefore are involved in its evolving history and environment. Group relationships with The National Forest are considered in more detail in Chapter 6.

Websites

Websites play an important role in communicating for the majority of the groups (see Figure 4.16). By the end of the research in 2010/2011, 27 of the 59 groups had their own individual websites and only three groups were not mentioned on the Internet at all. The number of group websites and locations of group website and web-information have been changing throughout the research period.

Figure 4.16: Table of Group Websites 2007

Group Name	Website
Appleby Heritage and Environmental Movement	http://www.applebymagna.org.uk/ahem_page.htm
Ashby Canal Association	www.ashbycanal.org.uk
Ashby Wolds Local History Group	http://www.infolinx.org/infolinx/infolinx_out.getres?id=11377&tem
Ashby Museum	http://ashbydelazouchmuseum.org.uk/
Bagworth Forward Group	http://www.LANDshapes.org/newsandevents/
Bagworth Historical Society	http://www.LANDshapes.org/newsandevents/BagworthHS.php
Barton under Needwood Civic Society	http://www.landshapes.org/newsandevents/BartonuNeedwoodCG.php
BTCV National Forest	http://www2.btcv.org.uk/display/btcv_nationalforest
Burton Conservation Volunteers	http://bcv.org.uk/
Burton Natural History and Archaeology Society	http://www.bnhas.org.uk/
Butterfly Conservation – East Midlands Branch	http://www.eastmidlands-butterflies.org.uk/
Charley Heritage Group	http://www.LANDshapes.org/newsandevents/CharleyCG.php now at:
Charnwood Museum (Friends of) - trying to gather interest to re-form in 2011	http://www.leics.gov.uk/index/community/museums/charnwood_museu
Charnwood Sunday Group (LRWT)	http://www.lnwt.org.uk/charnwood.asp now at: http://www.lnwt.org.uk/get-
Claymills Pumping Engines Trust	http://www.claymills.org.uk/
Coalville Historical Society (now merged to form Coalville Heritage Society)	http://www.coalville-heritage.info/about_the_society.html
Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Entomological Society	http://www.danes-insects.org.uk/
Derbyshire (south) Wildlife Trust	http://www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk/
Derbyshire Amphibian & Reptile Group	Via: http://www.derbyshirebiodiversity.org.uk/localgroups/index.php ,
Derbyshire Archaeology Society	http://www.derbyshireas.org.uk/
Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group	http://www.batsinderbyshire.org.uk/ ,
Derbyshire Conservation Volunteers	http://www.derby-cv.org.uk/
Derbyshire Family History Society	http://www.dfhs.org.uk/
Derbyshire Mammal Group	http://www.derbyshiremammalgroup.com/
Derbyshire Ornithological Society	http://www.derbyshireos.org.uk/
Desford and District Local History Society	http://www.LANDshapes.org/newsandevents/DesforddistrictCG.php
Donisthorpe and District Local History Group	http://www.LANDshapes.org/newsandevents/DDLHGprofile.php
Etwell & Burnaston Local History Society	http://www.etwallhistory.org/index.htm
Friends of Eureka	http://www.LANDshapes.org/newsandevents/FriendsofEurekaParkCG.p
Friends of Moira Furnace	http://www.lrmf.org.uk/p2-Museums.html#4
Friends of Rosliston Wood (Committee Only)	No
Hartshorne Local History Society	http://www.hartshorne.org.uk/Content/Organisations/HistorySociety.htm
Ibstock Historical Society	http://infolinx.leics.gov.uk/infolinx/infolinx_out.getres?id=11371&te
Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust	http://www.lnwt.org.uk/
Leicestershire and Rutland Family History Society	http://www.lrfhs.org.uk/
Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society	http://www.lros.org.uk/lrossales.htm
Leicestershire Archaeology and History Society	http://www.le.ac.uk/lahs/
Leicestershire Industrial History Society	http://lihs.org.uk/
Magic Attic	http://www.magicattic.org.uk/
Measham Museum	http://www.24hourmuseum.org.uk/museum_gfx_en/AM23003.html
Measham Village History Group	http://www.infolinx.org/infolinx/infolinx_out.getres?id=11364&tem
Melbourne Historic Research Group	http://www.mhrg.org.uk/
Nanpantan Victorian Garden	http://www.LANDshapes.org/newsandevents/NanpantanCG.php
Ratby Local History Group	http://beehive.thisisleicestershire.co.uk/default.asp?WCI=SiteHome&ID=
Repton Village History Group	http://www.LANDshapes.org/newsandevents/ReptonVillageCG.php
RSPB Local Group – Burton & South Derbyshire	http://www.basd-rspb.co.uk/
Sharpe's Pottery (Friends of)	http://www.sharpes.org.uk/friends.htm
South Derbyshire Badger Group	http://www.southderbyshirebadgergroup.co.uk/
South Derbyshire Family History Group	No
South Derbyshire Local History Forum	http://www.sharpes.org.uk/sdlhf.htm
South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group	http://www.newhallcommunity.org.uk/MiningGroup.asp now at:
Staffordshire Wildlife Trust - Burton and District Local Group	http://www.staffordshirewildlife.org.uk/
Staffordshire Bat Group	http://www.exploringthepotteries.org.uk/NoF_website1/natural_history_st
Swannington Heritage Trust	http://www.swannington-heritage.co.uk/
Thringston Archaeology & History Group	http://infolinx.leics.gov.uk/infolinx/infolinx_out.getres?id=14850&te
Ticknall Preservation & History Society	http://www.ticknall.org.uk/tphs/index.html
Whitwick Historical	http://www.culture24.org.uk/am22912
Willington History Group	http://www.willington-derbys.org.uk/LocalHistoryGroup.htm now at:
Witan Archaeology	http://www.LANDshapes.org/newsandevents/WitanArchaeologyCG.php

The groups provide a variety of information on their websites, with some groups just having one page, whilst others have many pages and sections. For example, the Ashby Canal Association website clearly states that it is a registered charity and gives a history of the group and its activities (Ashby Canal Association, 2011). The Swannington Heritage Trust website includes information on the Trust and the village including the variety of tasks which volunteers can get involved with (Swanning Heritage Trust, 2012) and the Claymills Victorian Pumping Station website is part of the Claymills Pumping Engine Trust and explains what you can see if you visit the site as well as the dates of the next steamings.

A number of the groups, which do not have specific websites of their own, are mentioned on websites belonging to others. For example, the Measham Museum was previously mentioned on the 24 Hour Museum – The National Virtual Museum website (24 Hour Museum, 2007), which had information on over 3000 museums. Ashby Museum, which does have its own website, was also on this website. The 24 Hour Museum was an online gateway to the UK's museums, galleries and heritage sites and displayed daily news articles and events and provided access to educational resources. The website was originally developed in 1999 and was managed by Culture 24, an independent charity, at the 24 Hour Museum website. However, since 2008, the 24 Hour Museum website has no longer been present on the Internet, although some information from the 24 Hour Museum can now be found on the Culture 24 website (see: Culture 24, 2011). An updated table, Figure 4.17, provides the website situations for the groups checked in 2012/2011:

Figure 4.17: Updated Website Status for Groups 2010/11

Group Name	Web?	Own site?
Appleby Heritage and Environmental Movement	No	No
Ashby Canal Association	Yes	Yes
Ashby Wolds Local History Group	Yes	No
Ashby Museum	Yes	Yes
Bagworth Forward Group	Yes	No
Bagworth Historical Society	YEs	No
Barton under Needwood Civic Society	Yes	No
BTCV National Forest	Yes	No
Burton Conservation Volunteers	Yes	Yes
Burton Natural History and Archaeology Society	No	No
Butterfly Conservation – East Midlands Branch	Yes	Yes
Charley Heritage Group	Yes	Yes
Charnwood Museum (Friends of) - trying to gather interest to re-form in 2011	Yes	No
Charnwood Sunday Group (LRWT)	Yes	No
Claymills Pumping Engines Trust	Yes	Yes
Coalville Historical Society (now merged to form Coalville Heritage Society)	Yes	Yes
Derbyshire & Nottinghamshire Entomological Society	Yes	Yes
Derbyshire (south) Wildlife Trust	Yes	No
Derbyshire Amphibian & Reptile Group	Yes	Yes
Derbyshire Archaeology Society	Yes	Yes
Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group	Yes	Yes
Derbyshire Conservation Volunteers	Yes	Yes
Derbyshire Family History Society	Yes	Yes
Derbyshire Mammal Group	Yes	Yes
Derbyshire Ornithological Society	Yes	Yes
Desford and District Local History Society	Yes	No
Donisthorpe and District Local History Group	Yes	No
Etwell & Burnaston Local History Society	Yes	Yes
Friends of Eureka	Yes	No
Friends of Moira Furnace	Yes	No
Friends of Rosliston Wood (Committee Only)	No	No
Hartshorne Local History Society	Yes	No
Ibstock Historical Society	Yes	No
Leicestershire & Rutland Wildlife Trust	Yes	No
Leicestershire and Rutland Family History Society	Yes	Yes
Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society	Yes	Yes
Leicestershire Archaeology and History Society	Yes	Yes
Leicestershire Industrial History Society	Yes	Yes
Magic Attic	Yes	Yes
Measham Museum	Yes	No
Measham Village History Group	Yes	No
Melbourne Historic Research Group	Yes	Yes
Nanpantan Victorian Garden	Yes	No
Ratby Local History Group	Yes	No
Repton Village History Group	Yes	No
RSPB Local Group – Burton & South Derbyshire	Yes	Yes
Sharpe's Pottery (Friends of)	No	No
South Derbyshire Badger Group	Yes	Yes
South Derbyshire Family History Group	No	No
South Derbyshire Local History Forum	No	No
South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group	Yes	Yes
Staffordshire Wildlife Trust - Burton and District Local Group	Yes	No
Staffordshire Bat Group	Yes	Yes
Swannington Heritage Trust	Yes	Yes
Thringston Archaeology & History Group	No	No
Ticknall Preservation & History Society	Yes	No
Whitwick Historical	Yes	No
Willington History Group	Yes	Yes
Witan Archaeology	Yes	No

The Friends of Moira Furnace Group does not have its own website either, although the Moira Furnace Museum Trust was previously mentioned on the Leicestershire and Rutland Museums Forum (Leicestershire and Rutland Museums Forum, 2007), and the Ibstock Historical Society was mentioned in the past on the Infolink Community Information Network for Leicestershire, Leicester and Rutland website, this website has since been updated (Infolink Leicester and Rutland, 2007). Ashby Woulds Local History Society and Measham Village History Group were also mentioned on the Infolink website. Ratby Local History Group is on the Beehive, Connecting Your Community, This is Leicestershire website (Beehive, 2011).

The Wildlife Trusts are county-based and have their own websites, which includes information on their local, associated groups, including the South Derbyshire local group, the Charnwood Sunday Group and the Burton and District local groups (Derbyshire Wildlife Trust 2012, Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust 2012, Staffordshire Wildlife Trust 2012). The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society has a separate website although its website address starts with the Leicester University web-address, www.le.ac.uk/ (Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, 2012). Despite this, it is not found by carrying out a search on the university website. The South Derbyshire Local History Forum previously had a page on the Sharpe's Pottery/Friends of Sharpe's Pottery website (Sharpe's, 2007), the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group had a page on the Newhall Community website (Newhall Community, 2007) and the Ticknall Preservation and Historical Society had a page on the Ticknall South Derbyshire website (Ticknall South Derbyshire, 2007).

The South Derbyshire Family History and South Derbyshire Mining Preservation groups were initially not found on the Internet at all although they are known to be active groups. The South Derbyshire Family History Group is still absent from the internet, however by 2011 the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Groups had got its own

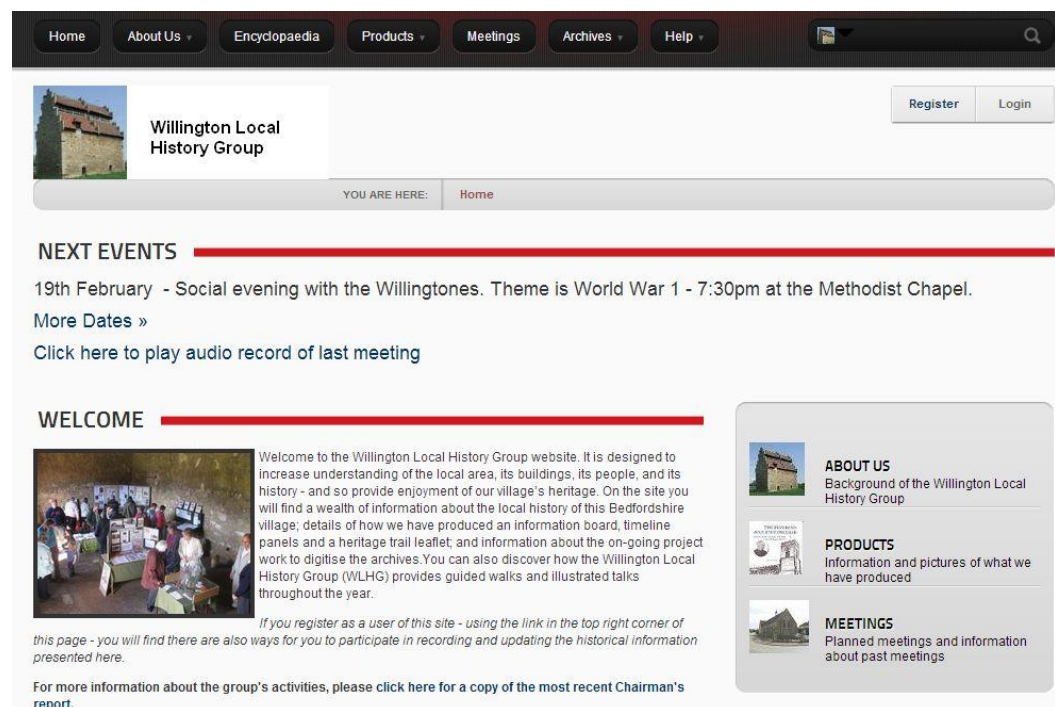
website (South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group, 2012). Four of the group websites, those of the Burton History and Natural History Society, of the Appleby Heritage and Environmental Movement (AHM), South Derbyshire Local History Forum and Thringston Archaeology and History Group have been removed from the Internet since the research began. Burton Natural History and Archaeology Society, which was founded in 1876, announced on its website in early 2008 that it had to close due to low attendance and a lack of people to organise events before the website disappeared. The group is still mentioned on the Internet on the Natural History Museum website, however it states that no current details for the organisation are available (Natural History Museum, 2012). No recent information was found on the web about the AHM, suggesting the group may no longer exist. Additionally, the volunteer interviewed about this group in 2004 did suggest that the group had diverged into various sub-groups and projects (Interview, 2004). The webpage and website where information on the South Derbyshire Local History Forum can no longer be found and during the interview with the volunteer from this group in 2008 the volunteer stated that the group no longer existed after having helped various local villages set up their own groups (Interview, 2008). Finally, the Thringston Archaeology and History Group can no longer be found on the Internet, however interestingly the Friends of Thringstone state that they set up a history sub-group in 2006 (Friends of Thringstone, 2012). It is not known if there is a connection between the two groups.

The Internet presence of the groups is constantly evolving as the groups change and develop with websites often having regular updates. Therefore the websites are dynamic and older versions cannot be so easily referred back to as, for example, old publications and leaflets. The Willington website, which hosted information on Willington History group and Witan Archaeology Group, displayed the following message in 2008 before disappearing altogether:

“After three years of not getting around to touching the website at all, it is with regret that I have to face the fact that I am never going to be able to maintain it as the “community site” it was intended to be... Besides, the net has moved on phenomenally since the Willington Web Site first went live in 1996, and resources such as “Myspace” have filled the role I envisaged for this site...” (The Willington Website, 2008)

It therefore appears that this website did not work. However, the Willington History now has its own website, see Figure 4.18, which also allow members to login and update historical information:

Figure 4.18: Willington History Group Website 2012

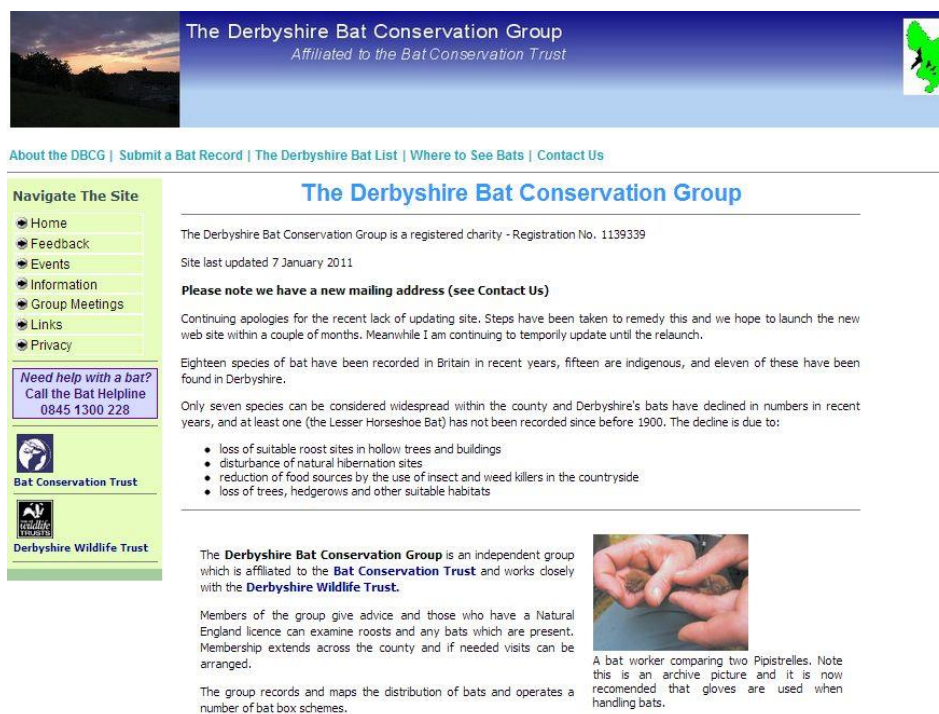


The Willington History Group website includes information on the background of the group and recent meetings, interestingly including an audio recording of the last meeting – it is the only group in the study known to do this. It also encourages viewers to register with the group order to actively participate. Other example of the environmental and historical interest groups’ increased Internet presence include the Etwall and Burnaston Local History Society, which did not have a website at

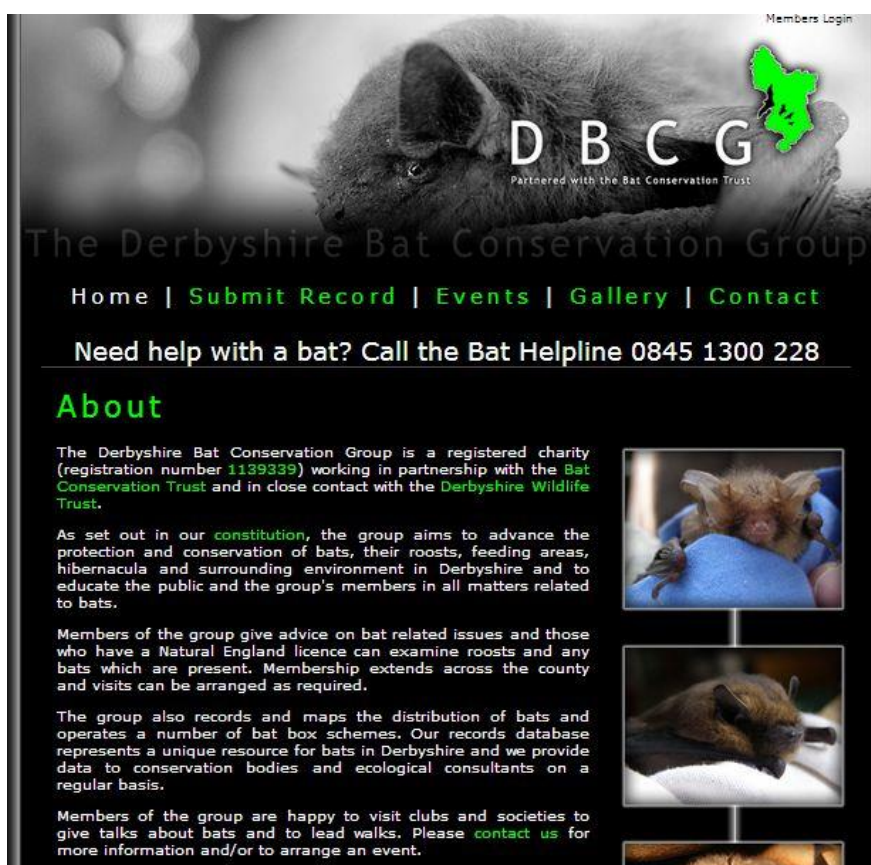
the start of the research and has now developed a simple site which includes information on the group, their publications and a link to the local village website. Similarly the Coalville Historical Society did not have a website at the beginning of the research however there is now a website for the Coalville Heritage Society, which resulted from the amalgamation of the Coalville Historical Society and the Coalville 150 Group in 2006. Thus highlighting how both websites and groups may change and develop.

The Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group website has also changed and moved location since the beginning of the research (Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group, 2011). The 2011 and 2012 Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group websites are shown in Figures 4.19a and 4.19b respectively. There is some continuity between the Derbyshire Bat Group Websites, with the new website stating 'The full mass of information from the old site has not yet been transferred to the new one so if you need anything please click here [Old Site](#)'.

**Figure 4.19a: Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group Website
December 2011**



**Figure 4.19b: Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group Website
September 2012**



It is interesting that both the new and old Derbyshire Bat Conservation websites are still in existence and that the new website stated that there is still more information present on the old website. Two of the main differences between the old and new websites are that the new website is much bolder in appearance and provides the opportunity for viewers to submit bat sighting records, again offering a more interactive element.

Some of the group websites include links to various other websites. For example, the Derbyshire Mammal Group has links to other mammal groups, some other groups in Derbyshire, and The National Forest. The Derbyshire Ornithological Society links to a large number of other bird related websites, from across the country. The Derbyshire Amphibian and Reptile Group had a web link to the Derbyshire Biodiversity web page, although it was initially formed through the Derbyshire Wildlife Trust. Fourteen of the groups included in this study are linked to The National Forest through their LANDshapes project website, as well as the East Staffs Heritage Trust Co. which was not included in this study due to it being a corporate Charitable Trustee body (see Figure 4.20).

Figure 4.20: LANDshapes Project Website November 2008

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LANDshapes
THE NATIONAL FOREST- HERITAGE IN THE MAKING

[Community News & Events](#) | [Little LANDshapes](#) | [LANDshapes Learning](#) | [The Archive](#)

You are here: [Home](#) > [Community News & Events](#) > [Community Group Profiles](#)

Community Groups List



Bagworth Forward Group

Bagworth Forward Group began in August 2001. We now have a committee of 14 members who all work hard to improve life in the village. We meet at the Bagworth Community Centre on alternate Thursdays at 7.30 p.m.

Bagworth Historical Society

Bagworth Historical Society formed on 16th October 2001. We have over 30 members, with usually 12 to 20 members attending any one meeting. We are currently researching information for our 4th booklet called A Village History. It will include chapters on The Village, The Churches, The Farms, The Public Houses, The Bier House and The Shops. Many of these buildings we have lost through subsidence damage.

Barton under Needwood Civic Society

The society formed 30 years ago in 1974. Our main aims are to protect the environment, architecture and fabric of the village. The work and activities of the civic society educate and entertain members of the local community. We produce an occasional newsletter.



Charley Heritage Group

The group of Charley residents formed in February 1999 to produce a Parish Map and Booklet for the Millennium. All wished to create a record of this beautiful part of Leicestershire. The group has continued to explore the heritage of the area.



Claymills Pumping Engines Trust

CPET is a registered charity and was formed in 1993 to promote and preserve, for the benefit of the public, the nineteenth century Claymills Pumping Station complex including all buildings, engines and equipment situated on the site.

Desford & District Local History Society

The society was formed in 1982 and we have a constitution. Our main interests are in Desford as a former coal mining area and in framework knitting.

Donisthorpe & District Local History Group

The group formed in 2001 to promote interest and awareness of the history of the Parish of Oakthorpe, Donisthorpe and Acresford. The area was mentioned in Domesday Book but little is known about the village until records were kept during the 17th century.



East Staffs Heritage Trust Co

Formed in 1982 East Staffs Heritage Trust works to preserve the built heritage of east Staffordshire. We are concerned with fostering & promoting the preservation of English architectural heritage that exists in East Staffordshire in the form of buildings and other features of particular beauty, architectural or constructional interest.

Friends of Eureka Park

Eureka Park is the central park of Swadlincote and has been established for many years. It does not currently reflect its past glory and the vision of the group is to work, in partnership with South Derbyshire District Council, to improve the facilities for the benefit of all users.

Measham Local History Group

The group formed from an evening class, which ran in 1988. Interest remained and has grown over the last 16 years. We are mainly concerned with preserving photographs and documents relating to Measham and its immediate surrounds. We work closely with Measham Museum creating exhibitions, which go on display in the Museum.



Melbourne Historical Research Group

Melbourne Historical Research Group formed in 2000. We mainly confine our heritage interests to the parish of Melbourne and the former parish of Derby Hills (now shared between Melbourne and Ticknall).




Nanpantan Victorian Garden

The Nanpantan Victorian Garden group formed in January 2004. We have practical Volunteer Days every week and the History Group meets every other month. There are currently 30 members and new members are always welcome. We produce a quarterly newsletter and the group has a constitution.

 <p>Ratby Local History Group</p> <p>Ratby Local History Group formed in December 2000 and have approximately 50 members. Their interests are wide and varied, covering many aspects of the history and heritage of Ratby. The group produces a newsletter every two months and has a constitution.</p>	<p>Repton Village History Group</p> <p>Repton Village History Group was formed in 1980 as a private research group and their interests lie in the history of Repton and surrounding villages. The group currently has 35 members and produces a monthly newsletter which is issued at meetings. Group members include those with the skills to transcribe documents and produce publications of their work - the group encourages members to undertake further research.</p>
<p>Witan Archaeology</p> <p>Witan Archaeology was formed in 1997 and their interests lie in all aspects of archaeology and local history in North West Leicestershire and surrounding districts. Current projects include Place-Name research for the Landshapes project and a field walking survey of National Forest tender schemes in Swepstone and Heather.</p> <p>An archive contribution for Witan Archaeology's Place-Name research can be viewed in the LANDshapes archive.</p>	

[Back to top](#)



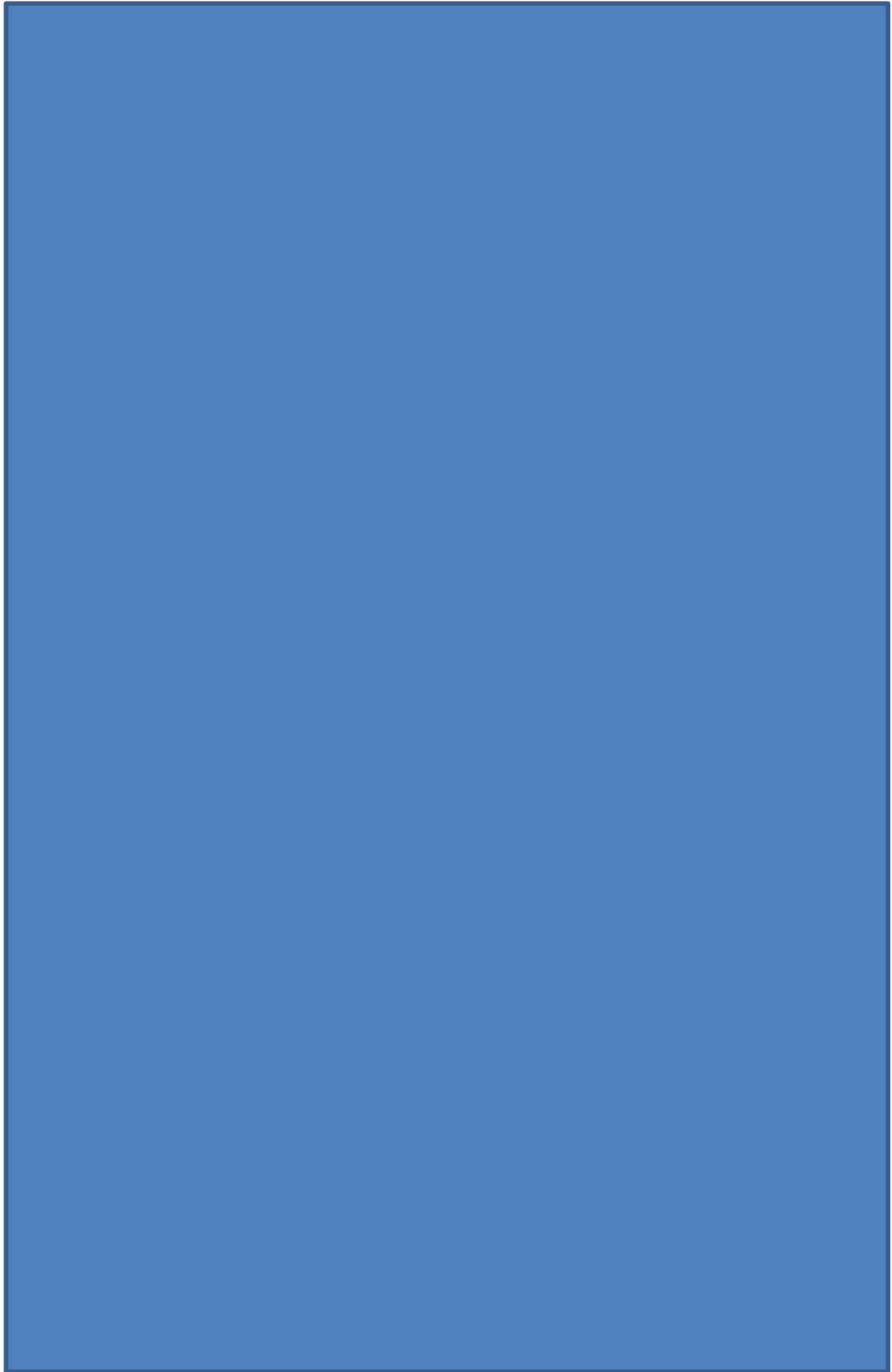
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 This site complies with HTML 4.01, CSS and Bobby AAA standards

This includes the following community group profiles: Bagworth Forward Group, Bagworth Historical Society, Barton-under-Needwood Civic Society, Charley Heritage Group, Claymills Pumping Engines Trust, Desford and District Local History Society, Donisthorpe and District Local History Group, East Staffordshire Heritage Trust Co, Friends of Eureka Park, Measham Local History Group, Melbourne Historical Research Group, Nanpantan Victorian Garden, Ratby Local History Group, Repton Village History Group and Witan Archaeology. All of the groups have a brief description, including, in most cases the date on which they were founded, the number of members and a description of activities. There are also six photos of places relevant to the groups listed. By clicking on the link to each group, additional information on the groups can be found, in varying amounts. For example, the Bagworth Forward Group page on the LANDshapes website includes information on Bagworth, a group profile, contact details and information on past and current projects. Only the East Staffordshire Heritage Trust Co and Ratby Local History Group have links to their own group websites.

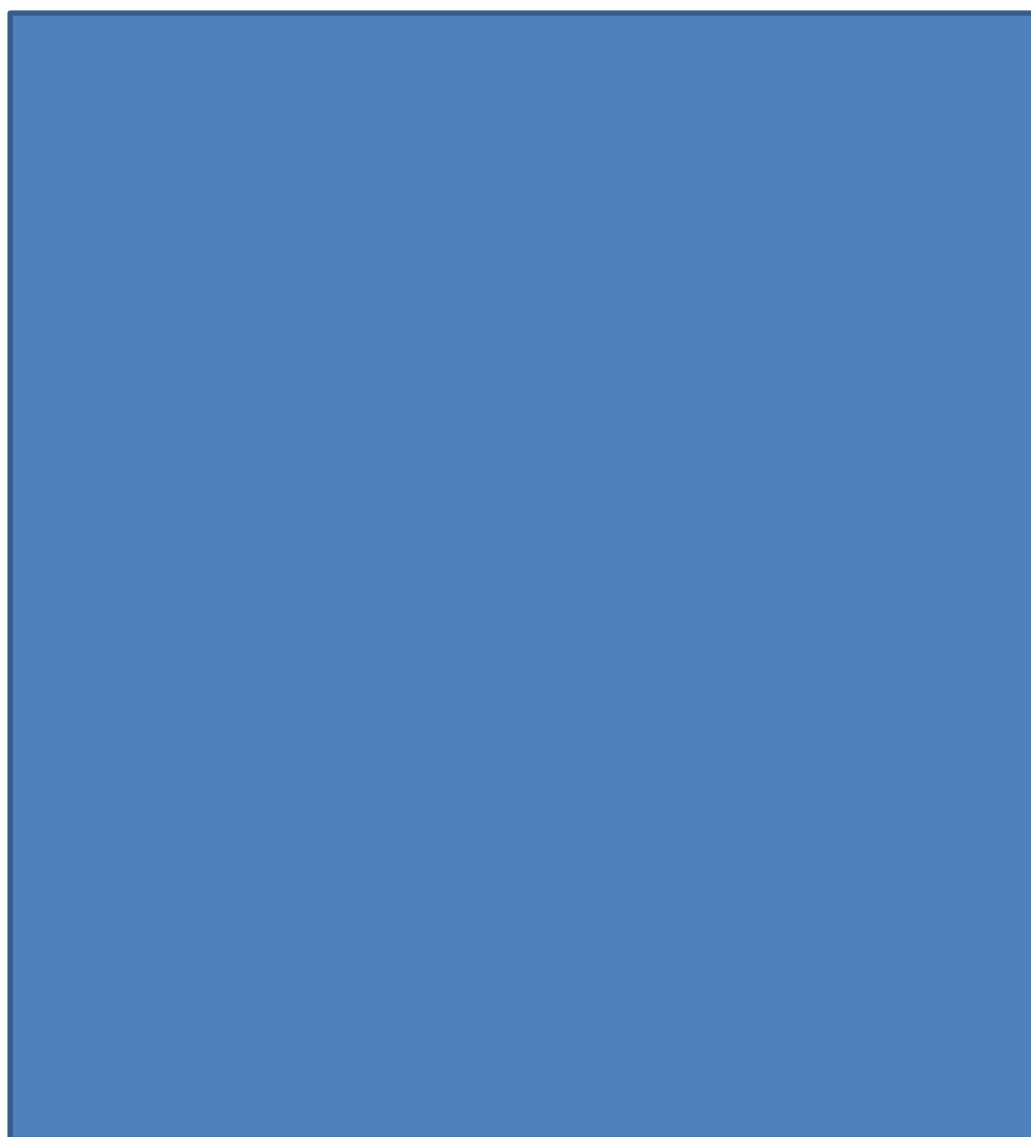
A number of environmental interest groups, including the Derbyshire Bat Group highlighted above, use their websites to encourage direct public involvement with their activities. The Derbyshire Mammal Group, for example, states on its website that several parts of the county are under-recorded, particularly in the south (which is the part in The National Forest) and that some species are also under-recorded, therefore, all data is useful. Similarly, Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society invite people to email with any local insect recordings and provide an opportunity to add additional links to the website. The Derbyshire Bat Conservation Group also allows viewers to submit bat sightings (see Figure 4.19), while the Derbyshire Mammal Group has an online record form (Figure 4.21), a downloadable garden mammal survey and a school grounds mammal survey.

Figure 4.21: Derbyshire Mammal Group Online Record Form

The image shows a large, solid blue rectangle that occupies the majority of the page below the caption. This rectangle represents the online record form for the Derbyshire Mammal Group. It is a uniform blue color with no text, lines, or other graphical elements visible within it.

The Derbyshire Ornithological Society has a link on its home page to the new, redesigned Carsington Bird Club website and there are online record forms to record bird sightings. The Burton and South Derbyshire Local Group of the RSPB has a more educational slant with a 'heads and tails' identify the birds quiz on its website (see Figure 4.22).

Figure 4.22: Burton and South Derbyshire RSPB Local Group Online Quiz



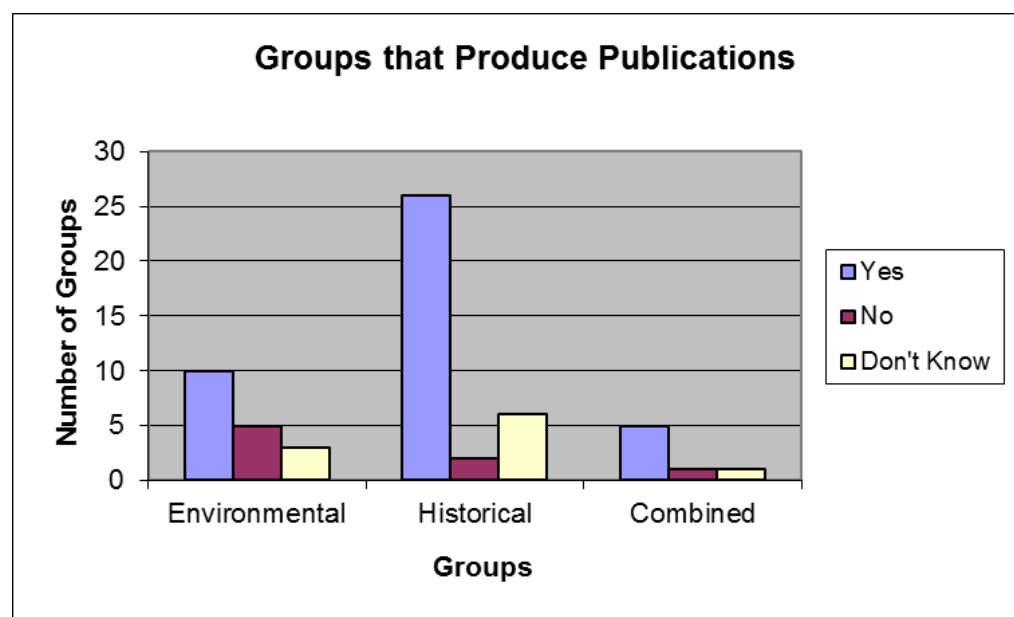
As can be seen by the above review of the group websites, representation on the Internet now has an important role. A range of information on the groups is available, as well as some opportunities for

submitting information and contributing to the groups' activities. Where individual group websites are not set up, local village and information websites provide opportunities for the groups to be promoted via the Internet. However, the constantly changing nature of the Internet means it is difficult to use as a stable research resource.

Group Documents

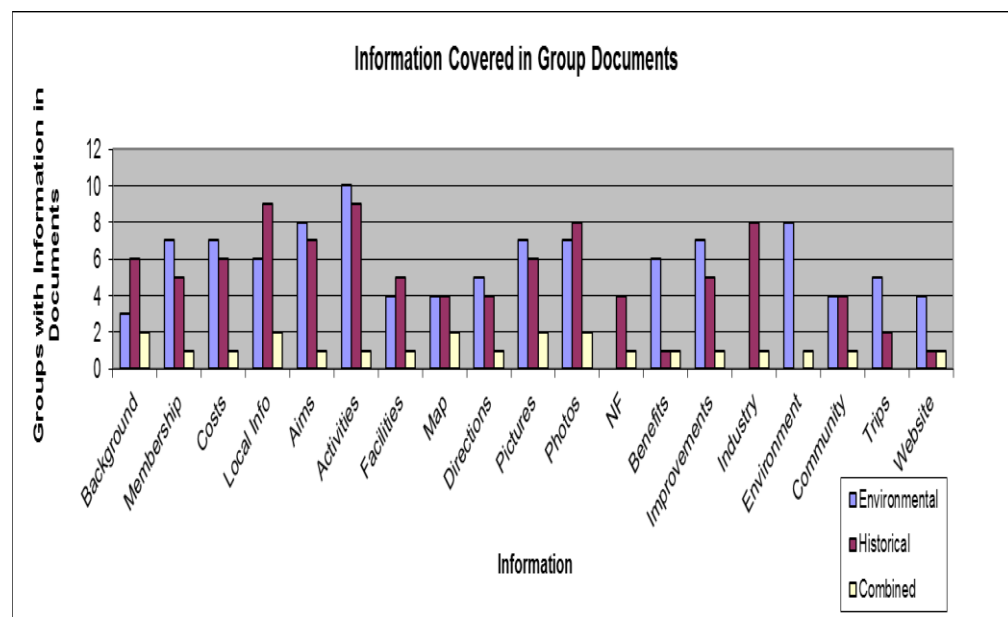
In terms of communicating with the public, almost three-quarters of the groups produce some form of publication such as leaflets, booklets or flyers (See Figure 4.23). Eight groups said that they do not produce any documents and for 10 groups this information was not known. A higher proportion, nearly three-quarters, of local history groups are known to produce publications and documents compared to just over half of the environmental groups and two thirds of the groups with combined historical and environmental interests. Of the eight groups that said they did not produce any documents, five were environmental interest groups.

Figure 4.23: Graph of Groups that Produce Publications



Documents are used to communicate a range of information about the groups, such as aims, activities, locality, the local industrial history (historical interest groups), the local environment (environmental interest groups), membership, costs and (in the case of environmental groups only) benefits and improvements (see Figure 4.24).

Figure 4:24 Information Covered in Group Documents



It is useful to analyse a range of group documents in further detail in order to determine how the different groups portray and advertise themselves and their activities. Key themes considered in relation to group documents are: the range of group documents, the sharing of information, fundraising to cover the costs of production and links to wider projects.

Documents considered include: 25 flyers, 11 pamphlets, one site guide, one poster, one book and one ticket. Additionally, several other local history books and a calendar relating to local history groups were also later used as additional references for the study.

Unusually, the Repton Village History Group was the only group which volunteers described as not initially sharing its findings and historical records with the wider public but now it uses publications as a way of doing so:

“No, no they just sat on it, very proudly sat with it all in their attics, I mean they had over 1000 photographs up to the last year and nobody had seen any of them! Now we have published books, we do displays, we try to bring it more out into the open - people should have access to this material” (Interview, 2005)

Another volunteer from the Friends of Ashby Museum highlighted how they use documents and other media to bring the group’s activities to life for the wider public:

“... Yes we have got leaflets, posters, we use a lot of the local press... you see here, this has come out today, “Green Light for Museum...” that’s the front page of the local rag, we promote ourselves as often as we can and as regularly as possible... every year we have a temporary exhibition... right from the start we published about seven or eight booklets” (Interview, 2004)

This South Derbyshire Family History Group volunteer also explained that their group has produced compact discs:

“We’ve got a lot of local history books and also CDs and things like that, that people buy from us” (Interview, 2005)

The South Derbyshire Writers Group, leading to the development of the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group in 1999, produced four books, one audio cassette (now CD) and Millennium Procession Scripts during its existence as shown in Figure 4.25:

Figure 4.25: Table of South Derbyshire Writers Group/Mining Preservation Group Projects

Year	Title	Source of Funding	ISBN:	Shop price
1998	'Out of the Dark'	South Derbyshire District Council East Midlands Arts Rural Coalfields Initiative Fund Council for Voluntary Services	1 899661 25 3	£5.00
1999	'Into the Light 2000'	Awards for All - Lottery Grant South Derbyshire District Council Rural Coalfields Initiative Fund	0 9536288 0 9	£5.00
2000	'A Garland of Verse'	Group funds	-	£4.00
1999	'Sounds Like Swad'	Art for Everyone - Lottery Grant	CD	£4.00
2000	Millennium Procession Scripts	Single Regeneration Budget Grant	-	-
2000	'Down The Oversetts'	Group Funds Sharpe's Pottery Heritage and Arts	-	£3.00

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This indicates a flurry of activity between 1998 and 2000, since when no new publications have been identified. This may be due to the South Derbyshire Writers Group no longer being in existence (Interview, 2008). The South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group focus more on hosting a collection of tools, books, photographs and multi-media showing the mining heritage at Gresley Old Hall (Go Leicestershire, 2012).

Eleven groups, including the Ticknall Preservation and History Group, produce their own publications which are sold to raise funds for the group:

“We do produce publications and they do sell very well. We have done them for years and that is how we make our money. The National Trust used to sell a lot because a lot is... on Calke. Certainly now they tend to go through centralised organisations so we have to sell them in other places, but we do publications and people do buy them. They tend to be on the cheap side... we’ve always believed that you’ve got to try and produce it cheaply and provide a quality product” (Interview, 2008)

The Thringston Archaeology and History Group also said that they produced publications which are sold:

“We have produced one booklet and two more are in the pipeline... There’s that book that is coming out in another few months and then we are doing some leaflets on walks around the area, which show different aspects of the village to people. Erm, we’ve got this graveyard survey to

do and then put on a database... it takes about two and a half years to do of course [laughs]. So now, we are really beginning to put things together in books and pamphlets, which we are selling around the village” (Interview, 2004)

One specific example of a local history publication is a booklet produced by the Hartshorne Local History Society entitled: ‘A Pictorial History of the N.W. Leicestershire and South Derbyshire Coalfield’ by Alan E. Sharratt. There is a full page advertisement for the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group on the front cover of this booklet but no additional details on the Hartshorne Local History Society, which suggests some sort of link between the groups.²⁷ There is a general text introduction followed by a selection of photographs with descriptions. There is no price on the booklet to indicate if it is sold or not. Another example is ‘Life and Times in Old Moira’ by the Ashby Woulds and District Local History Group, which has a drawing of the Moira Furnace on the front cover and a 1898-1901 map of the Moira area on the inside of the front cover. This booklet has been published by the Magic Attic,²⁸ is priced at £8 and dated 2005. It includes 20 chapters and runs to 212 pages. The contents are made up of a selection of old photographs and text.

Examples of publications include ‘Out of the Dark’ (see Figure 4.26a) is a 180 page, paperback, book of ‘Swadlincote Stories’ and includes four chapters on: Growing Up, The Heart of Swad, Pits, Pots and Pipes, and Entertainment. There is a foreword by the Chair of the South Derbyshire District Council’s Leisure Services Manager and an introduction by the South Derbyshire Writer’s Group. In order to produce the book, the South Derbyshire Writer’s Group spent two years recording local people’s stories. ‘Into the Light’ (see Figure 4.26b) was published a year

²⁷ No direct contact was made with the Hartshorne Local History Society to confirm this and the representative from the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Society did not mention any particular links with other local history groups.

²⁸ The Magic Attic volunteers said that they often share information with other groups and the Ashby Woulds Local History Group also said that they had links with other groups.

later as a special Millennium publication, a book of 'More Swadlincote Stories' about the changes between the 1930s and the Millennium. This book is 191 pages long, and again is a paperback. The chapters in this book are: Through the War, Exciting Years, Life after Salts, and History in the Making. In addition to the list of publications in Figure 4.25, a 'South Derbyshire Coalfield Commemorative Calendar 2004', produced by the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group was also discovered during the research. Five hundred of these calendars were produced and they were sold for £3.50 each. The calendar includes advertisements for local industries that sponsored the calendar, as well as a selection of local mining history photographs. For example, the cover photo is of the circular tunnelling machine and miners.²⁹

²⁹ The MRDE (Bretby) designed Circular Tunnelling Machine was assembled underground at Caldley Hill Colliery in 1981.

Figure 4.26a Front Cover of 'Out of the Dark' book



Figure 4.26b: Front Cover of 'Into the Light' book



Volunteers from six groups specifically referred to the production of newsletters, and one referred to their producing regular magazines. An example of a publication produced by an environmental group is the newsletter, called 'Heritage', produced by the Leicestershire and Rutland Ornithological Society:

"They publish a quarterly bulletin, and the reports in there of various species come from well, mostly north Leicestershire... yes, yes, the quarterly bulletin, which is called Heritage. It's quite good. Yes, it's a twenty-page newsletter. The records are sent in over the preceding quarter" (Interview, 2004)

The newsletter not only keeps members up to date with the group's activities but is a record of the birds surveyed. The South Derbyshire Wildlife Trust Local Group also uses documents, as well as the local press, to promote the group and its activities:

"... That [leaflet] and the magazine... We have flyers we take to fairs and different places and [name removed] puts up posters in all the areas and it's in the magazine and it's on Radio Derby and it's in the Burton Mail" (Interview, 2007)

Some groups also sell and promote publications which are not their own, for example the three Wildlife Trust local groups promote and sell publications produced by the Wildlife Trust, the RSPB local group provide RSPB publications and Butterfly Conservation East Midlands offers national butterfly magazine. Interestingly the Derbyshire Ornithological Society don't mention selling publications but they do state that they charge Ecological Consultants and other commercial concerns for providing data (Derbyshire Ornithological Society, 2012)

Case Studies

Case studies have been presented in this chapter in order to illustrate how individual groups are involved in a variety of activities and made up of a range of group dynamics. Therefore the groups in this study can be considered and classified in a range of different ways. Additionally, the set up and organisation of each of the groups has its own variations and complexities. This section presents case studies on four of the groups; the RSPB Burton and South Derbyshire Local Group, the Friends of Eureka Park, the Charnwood Sunday Group and the Magic Attic. These case studies aim to provide an insight into different group dynamics through in-depth consideration of their development and operation. Two environmental groups, one historical interest group, and one group with combined historical and environmental interest are considered in the case studies.

RSPB Burton and South Derbyshire Local Group

The RSPB Burton and South Derbyshire Local Group is one of only three groups in the study which covers more than one county area, all of which have environmental interests, and one of the five groups focusing on a larger area or region. This local RSPB group was founded in 1976 along with three other groups that were set up in the 1970s (two historical and one with environmental and historical interests). No particular reason for the group being founded was discovered, as the volunteer interviewed was not a founding member and this information was not provided on the group's website. However, Winter (1996) showed that there was an rapid increase in RSPB members between 1975 and 1995, which may explain why a local group was instigated in the area at this time. It is one of 36 groups in the study that stated they have a management committee. The group usually has 20-35 attendees at each of its indoor meetings, however unlike some other local RSPB groups, the Burton and South Derbyshire RSPB Local

Group states that it does not require you to be a member in order to attend events:

“Anyone can come along to meetings or trips. There is just an admittance fee...” (Interview, 2008)

Indeed it is one of six environmental groups in the study stating that it has an open attitude. However, as with 29 of the groups it also stated that its membership is getting older. Additionally, as with eleven other groups (two environmental) it holds its meetings every 1-4 months, more precisely it holds them every month throughout the year. It charges a £2.50 admittance fee to attend its indoor meetings and £14 for field trips. It is also one of 29 groups in the study to have its own website as well as being mentioned on the national RSPB website.

This RSPB local group is one of 22 groups in the study (16 of which are environmental) which are associated with other groups or organisations. The RSPB, founded in 1889 (RSPB, 2012), today has a number of local groups run by volunteers. The Burton and South Derbyshire Local Group is one of these and has been running since 1973 offering both indoor meetings, based at All Saints Church Hall, Burton on Trent and outdoor field trips (Interview, 2008). The group has had problems finding a regular place to meet. It used to meet at Burton College a long time ago but there was no social space. Then it met at Burton Library but had to move out when the computers were installed. One of the members of the group committee is a Church Warden and said they could come to the church for a reasonable price (Ethnog, 2008). The RSPB Burton and South Derbyshire Local Group is the only RSPB local group listed on the RSPB local group pages, which is located in The National Forest. Interestingly this group in some ways may be seen as a group without a voluntary element as most of its activities are centred around talks and field trips. However, the group has a volunteer committee who organise the programme of events and arrange speakers for the talks in order to provide attendees with greater bird

knowledge and experience. So it can be argued that they volunteer in order to promote an interest in and knowledge about birds and the work of the RSPB. The volunteer interviewed from this group also stated that the group was involved in recording birds however this is not clear from the group literature.

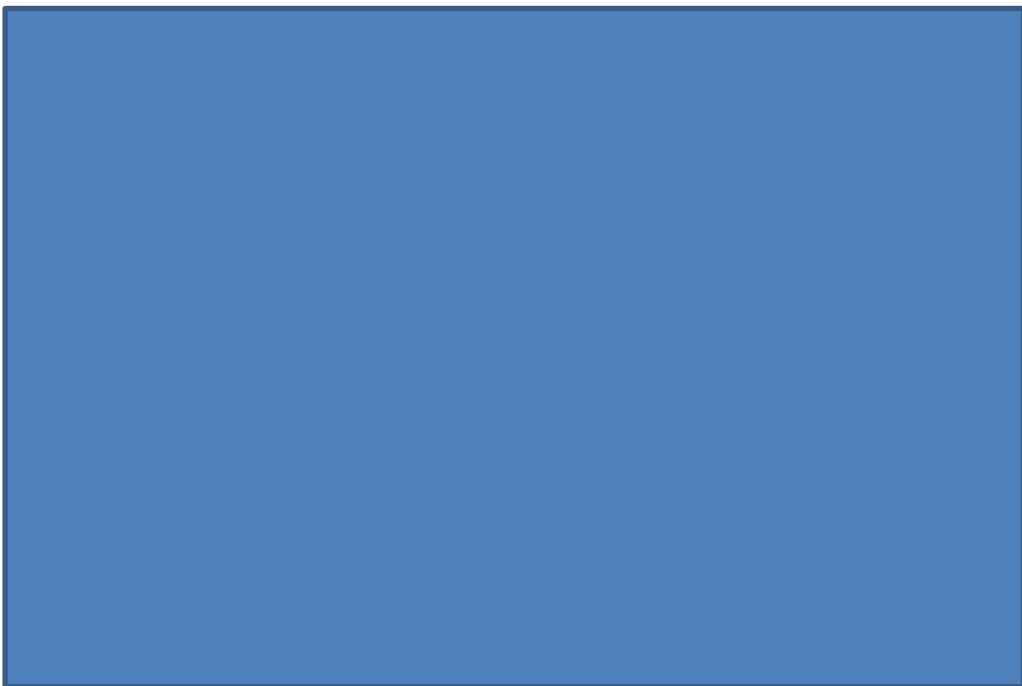
This RSPB local group is also interesting in relation to this study in that it is based in Burton on Trent, Staffordshire but covers the areas of Burton and South Derbyshire. Therefore it covers a particular town in East Staffordshire, but also a whole section of the county of Derbyshire. However, Burton and South Derbyshire are both interesting in terms of environment and landscape for birds. Burton on Trent is set in the Trent Valley, an area which has been subjected to sand and gravel extraction leaving large holes that have filled with water, resulting in a number of good bird watching sites. South Derbyshire also has a number of similar sites resulting from the coal and clay mining industries (Burton and South Derbyshire RSPB Local Group, 2012). For example Branston Water Park, Staffordshire (see Figure 4.27), formed from the flooding of a disused gravel pit and now supports wildlife habitats including a woodland, a lake and one of the largest reed beds in Staffordshire (The National Forest, 2012). In Derbyshire, Willington Pits is a former sand and gravel quarry and an important wetland habitat (see Figure 4.28) (Wildlife Extra, 2012).

Figure 4.27: Branston Water Park



(Source: The National Forest, 2012)

Figure 4.28: Willington Gravel Pits



(Source: LandWaterAir, 2012)

The Burton and South Derbyshire RSPB Local Group (2012) also states on its website that The National Forest is 'local' to it and that it is going to see how this affects the wildlife.

The group has regular indoor meetings and field trips. It uses its indoor meetings as a way of sharing knowledge and its outdoor meetings for getting out and enjoying the countryside, seeing things, and passing on knowledge (Interview, 2008). The national RSPB has a list of approved speakers however they are not always affordable for the size of the group - as speakers retire from their careers they tend to put up the price of their talks, so the Local Group selects alternatives (Ethnog. 2008). Its indoor meetings programme is reproduced in Figure 4.29:


Figure 4.29: Burton and South Derbyshire RSPB Local Group Indoor Meetings Programme 2012-13

Date	Speaker	Subject
May 2nd.	Chris Edwards.	Sandwell Valley.
September 5th.	Peter Johnson.	Peru.
October 3rd.	Anna Broszkiewicz.	Fetla, its wildlife and natural history.
November 7th.	Ken Webb.	Florida.
December 5th..	Peter Williams.	Christmas Social.
January 2nd.	Brian George.	Birds of Prey.
February 6th.	TBC.	TBC.
March 6th.	Peter and Margaret Preece.	Digital Images of Nature.
April 3rd.	AGM.	Films.

As can be seen by the programme for 2012-13, subjects are interestingly not limited to birds and habitats in the local area. Field trips

also tend to be visits to habitats outside of The National Forest (see Figure 4.30). The group uses a minibus for trips and used to be able to fill a coach (Interview, 2008). It often tends to just be the committee who come on the trips and a few members just attend trips. About four people go to the talks at Lichfield, but come on the trips with the Burton group as the Lichfield local group does not do many trips now. More of the younger bird watchers also now go out on their own rather than with a group. They have more access now to information, high tech equipment and transport that previously they relied on the group for. However, some younger bird watchers have returned to the area in their 30's after a number of years travelling about on their with a renewed interest in their local area in their early years (Ethnog. 2008).

Figure 4.30: Burton and South Derbyshire RSPB Local Group Field Trips 2012-13

All Mini Bus trips start at the car park adjacent to the Burton Mail office, High St Burton (see map). The cost is £14 per head and is strictly first come first served.				
Our Car trips meet at the venue				
Ref No.	Date	Location	Details	Time
BASD-0412	April 22 nd	North Derbyshire.	Meet at Cut throat Bridge on A57.(SK216874)	09.00am
BASD-0512	May 20 th	Lake Vyrnwy RSPB Reserve.	Mini Bus Leaves Burton.	06.30am
BASD-0612	June 10 th	Minsmere RSPB Reserve.	Mini Bus Leaves Burton.	06.30am
BASD-	July 8 th	Ottmoor RSPB	Mini Bus Leaves Burton.	06.30am

0712		Reserve.		
BASD-0712a	July 20 th	Evening walk, Cannock Chase.	Meet at the Springslade Lodge car park.	09.00pm
BASD-0812	August 12 th	Sence Valley, Kelham Bridge.	Meet at Sence Valley car park.	09.00am
BASD-0912	September 16 th	Buton Mere Wetlands RSPB Reserve.	Mini Bus Leaves Burton.	06.30am
BASD-1012	October 14 th	Migration Hotspot.	Mini Bus Leaves Burton.	06.30am
BASD-1112	November 11 th	Rutland Water, Eyebrook Reservoir.	Meet at Egleton reserve car park. (permit charge for non-members).	09.00am
BASD-1212	December 9 th	Attenborough Gravel Pits.	Meet at main car park.	09.00am
BASD-0113	January 20 th	Rufford CP, Clumber Park.	Meet at the Rufford car park off the A614.	09.00am
BASD-0213	February 17 th	Frampton Marsh and Frieston RSPB reserve.	Mini Bus Leaves Burton.	06.30am
BASD-0313	March 17 th	New Fancy View.	Mini Bus Leaves Burton.	06.30am
BASD-	April 21 st	Highnam	Mini Bus Leaves Burton.	06.30am

0413		Woods, Nags Head RSPB Reserve.		
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Summary: The Burton and South Derbyshire RSPB Local Group is nearly forty years old and is one of many country-wide or particular area based local RSPB groups. However is not significantly associated with local place and members' field trips involve visiting sites both in and out of the area. The group is not a typical example of an environmental interest group in this study as it does not have volunteers obviously involved in recording species or conservation activities. However key members of the group volunteer to organise educational talks and fields trips for other members and non-member participants to attend. The groups organises both indoor talks and outdoor field trips, with the indoor meetings held at a church in Burton on Trent. Both members and non-members are welcome to attend the events. Like many groups the RSPB Burton and South Derbyshire Local Group said that its membership is getting older, however it has a well-attended regular programme of events and an up to date website promoting the group.

Friends of Eureka Park

The idea of the Friends of Eureka Park came about due to concerns about the state of the local park and the group was officially founded and constituted in 2003 (the a group unofficially started getting together from 2001) with the assistance of the local council. Therefore, the Friends of Eureka Park are one of three groups with combined environmental and historical interest which has links with other groups and organisations:

"I was absolutely devastated when I saw the state of it... it was absolutely in terrible condition... we got to know two gentlemen... got really involved with park and the discussing state it was in... about 2001

when we first got involved with them... we decided in 2003 to form Friends of Eureka park, a partnership between the Friends of and the council" (Interview, 2008)

The Friends of Eureka Park is one of two groups with combined environmental and historical interest to be founded in the 2000s. One other group with environmental and historical interests and seven groups with historical interests were also founded at this time. The main reason for the formation of this group was 'protection', three other groups with combined interests, two with historical interests and one with environmental interests formed for this reason. The main aim of the group is to have a clean, well-looked after, park and it has been involved in looking after the park, repairs, changes, contributing to the local Festival of Leisure event, doing a walk, talks, and creating a booklet on the history of the park. Therefore, they are one of three combined interest groups involved in protection activities and the only combined interest group involved in researching and recording. The Friends of Eureka Park focuses on just one small area – Eureka Park, in South Derbyshire and is one of 42 groups to be linked to a particular location. The group has a committee set-up, typical of the majority of groups in this study. The group generally meets in the summer months only, and was therefore classified as one of only four groups in this study which have a varied meeting frequency.

Numbers are now dwindling, with the group having abandoned the idea of having a paid membership (due lack of active participation by the paying membership) and two of the key members having to withdraw from the group due to personal circumstances. At the time of the interview (4th August 2008) and ethnographic observation (26th July 2008) of this group it had only five active members, and so is the only group with combined environmental and historical interests in this study with under 15 members. However, it had as many as 80 inactive paying members in the past and produced a regular newsletter for them up until early 2006:

“People were prepared to pay a pound in membership, but they weren’t prepared to help... there does not seem to be anything we can do to get them to help” (Interview, 2008)

The low attendance at the event I observed in 2008, and the age of the volunteers present, illustrates the problems this group is facing. These issues are discussed further below. The core members of the Friends of Eureka Park were initially very active:

“We were very hands-on, very involved with the park, we’d do tree cutting, the pavilion we painted, the memorial gates we painted, also the entrance gates at St Johns... all the seats were renovated, all with money that we raised through our membership” (Interview, 2008)

The memorial gates dedicated in 1933 (see Figure 4.31) were regularly painted (at least until 2006) by the Friends of Eureka Park prior to the yearly Armistice Day parade. A further set of memorial gates were put in place at the end of Memorial Avenue to commemorate WWII, but these were damaged in the 1970s and only one side now remains (Friends of Eureka, 2006). However, levels of activity have declined both due to inactivity and age:

“It’s definitely dropped, with good reason, we are not active like we were, simply because... the core membership... we are all getting older now... we’ve all got various ailments... we can’t do what we could do five years ago” (Interview, 2008)

The Friends of Eureka Park are one of 29 groups in this study which are predominantly made up of older people. The approach and situation of the group is well-illustrated by reference to my attendance at a Friends of Eureka Park event. I arrived at the park on 4th August 2008 to find a small group of three people waiting by the memorial gates (see Figure 4.31). The walk around the park had been publically advertised, inviting

anyone who was interested to attend but only the Chair of the Friends of Eureka Park, the Secretary and the Secretary's wife came along. Indeed, one of the volunteers highlighted:

“We are about five, we became very disillusioned because the work we were doing, the council didn't seem to be putting themselves into it... and we didn't seem to be able to get the younger people” (Interview, 2008)

At the walk event, the group were waiting for someone from the charity, Groundwork to arrive. The idea was that Groundwork would outline some potential plans for the park, and the Friends of Eureka Park would explain some of the history of the park. Another man, and woman with a dog, turned up, and then a slightly younger couple – the rest were of retirement age.

Figure 4.31: Eureka Park Memorial Gates



(Source: Towns, 2011)

Figure 4.32: Eureka Park



(Source: Towns, 2011)

The woman with the dog was from a neighbouring housing estate and said that she said that she had always supported the park and the group, as she lived locally and was a regular user of the park (see above Figure 3.32). The wife of the Secretary was pleased that I – ‘someone new’ – had come along for the walk. She said that there had been quite a lot of motivation in the early 2000s when the group started up but that now the original members weren’t so active and hadn’t got new active members to take over. In fact, if Groundwork had not contacted the group about doing this project, it might have finished altogether.

As we went into the park, the Chair explained that in the 1920s the park was known as Swadlincote Recreation Grounds and in the 1930s became known as Eureka Park. By the entrance to the park, there are still gas ventilator shafts from the coalmine situated below. We were shown pictures of the brick structures that used to cap the shafts, which

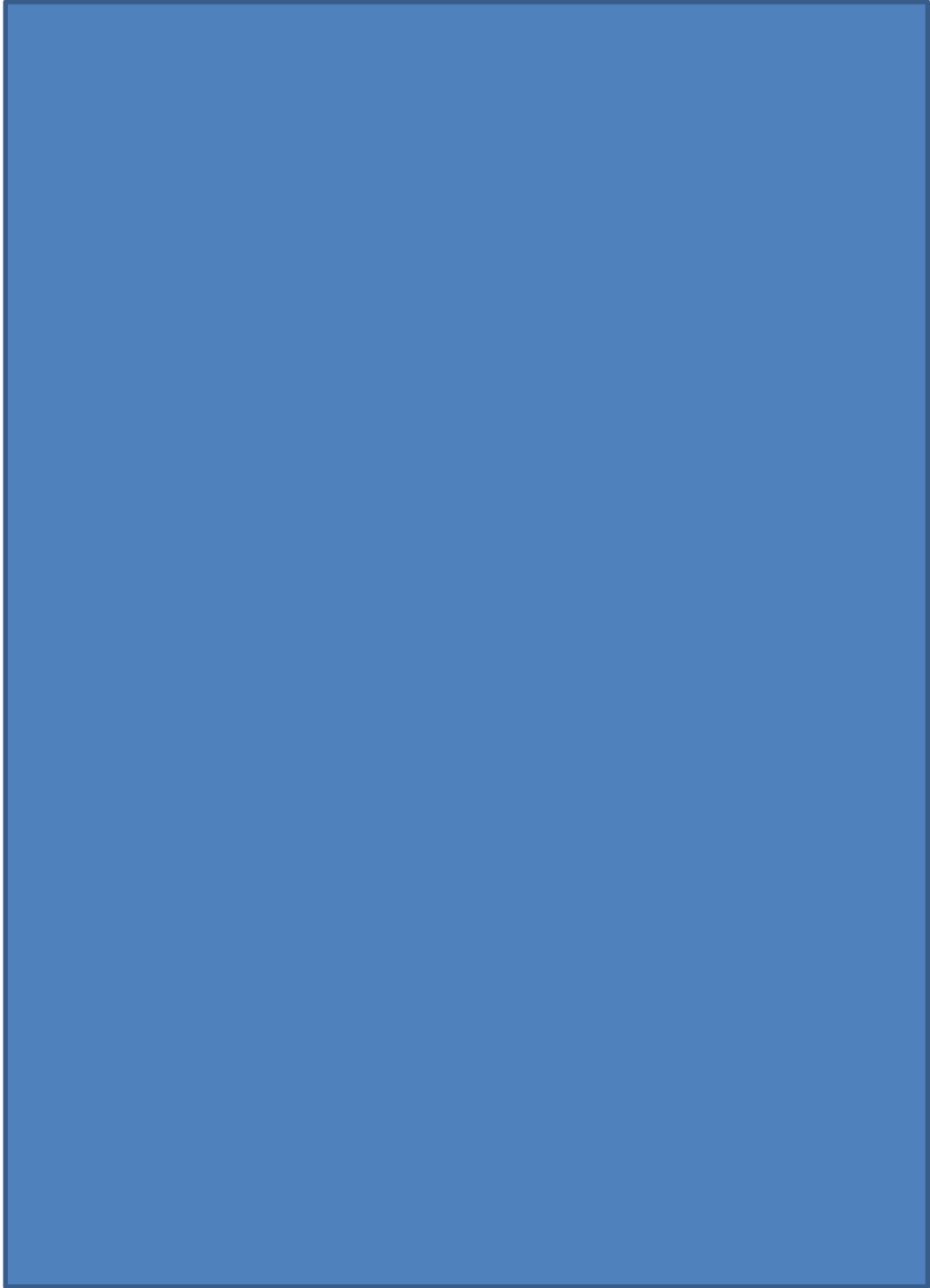
were local landmarks, until they were demolished in the 1930s. This was the first time the group had organised a walk around the park however, it had previously arranged public discussions about the park:

“We’ve organised talks in the local village hall... in the library... we had the local dog warden at one point... people say we want a clean park... so we said come a long and give your opinions... you organise a discussion... you advertise it... and you get half a dozen people turn up...there has been a lot of disinterest...” (Interview, 2008)

The group has put leaflets through doors to try and generate interest but this has not been very successful.

The group has however been successful in gaining successful grant funding in order to carry out a variety of projects. The group goes about its own fundraising with the support of the local council, previously gaining £1000 Heritage Lottery Funding via a grant from The National Forest in 2005. This first Heritage Lottery Fund grant awarded to the group was as part of The National Forest LANDshapes Project in order to fund park research with the Magic Attic group, a historical interest group also included in this study. The booklet produced as a result of this is called ‘Historical Review of Eureka Park, Swadlincote’ (see Figure 4.33):

Figure 4.33: Front Cover of Eureka Park Heritage Booklet



Therefore it is one of five groups with combined interests that have produced publications. However:

“We were not allowed to sell it. We sent out copies to our members, there were about 80 then, I think we sent about 80 copies out... there is

a copy at the library... there were copies given to the council, it was quite well received... we did a launch of the book at the library” (Interview, 2008)

The group was quite active during the research for this booklet making regular visits to the local Magic Attic archives. It does not have a website of its own however it is mentioned on The National Forest’s LANDshapes project website. The group events, such as park walks, are advertised on the noticeboards in Eureka Park, which were erected by the Friends of Eureka Park (see Figure 3.34). However despite the project resulting in the group working with Magic Attic, according to one volunteer, the grant discouraged another local group from getting together with the Friends of Eureka Park, when they suggested an amalgamation:

“Other groups would rather avoid us. There was another group at Newhall, which we would have liked to amalgamate with. They were actually a bit envious, saying we’d got money that they should have had... but they folded as well... the same reasons as have happened with us, although we’ve not folded yet. They just packed up” (Interview, 2008)

This project was finished in late 2005/early 2006.

Figure 4.34: Eureka Park Notice Board



(Source; Towns, 2011)

The group also gained a £20,000 Living Spaces Grant (distributed by Groundwork) to pay for seats, signage, a picnic area and path in 2005 and a £2,500 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund in 2006. A South Derbyshire District Council-led Parks for People project, funded through Groundwork, in took place from 2006 to 2008. This was funded by a project development grant through which Groundwork provided £42,000 worth of development and consultations work via a service level agreement with the council. One of the plans of the Groundwork Project is was replace these brick structures to their previous condition and to expand the boundary fences to include the outer grassy area and make it more of a part of the park. The park has some interesting history. For example, during World War II the local community buried the cast-iron gate on the Newhall Road side of the park so that it would not have to be surrendered for war-time supplies. Around 30 years ago the gates were dug up and re-instated. There was also some discussion about litter in the park and members of the group said that they often pick up

litter in the park and that, since they have had the dog waste bins, the park was much cleaner and the bins were used by many dog walkers. The Groundwork representative said several of the trees were rotten and needed to come down. The group were quite upset about this, but cheered up when he said that they would all be replaced. This indicates that volunteers with the group are quite attached to the trees which are considered key features in the park. However, this project fizzled out any actual developments going ahead in the park.

Despite this shortly afterwards the group did produce a DVD in 2008, again working with the Magic Attic, of interviews with local people on 'A Day in the Life of the Park', which included several members of The Friends of Eureka Park. The production of the DVD was produced with financial assistance from The National Forest, East Midlands Airport and the Magic Attic. A new park development project is now in progress funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is hoped that through involvement with the recent, council-led, Heritage Lottery-funded project, 'Invisible Heritage' the group will be able to attract new members to help with the development and upkeep of the park. The project has been designed to take account of the history of the park and to increase the multi-use of the park. The initial 'Invisible Heritage' has led on to a second stage of Heritage Lottery Funding with the group recently being guaranteed further financial support from the Heritage Lottery Fund via a £547,300 Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and the Big Lottery Fund (BIG) grant awarded to South Derbyshire District Council in December 2012. Part of this funding is hoped to go towards boosting the membership of the Friends of Eureka Park group through providing training and support to learn new skills to work alongside the project team to help improve facilities.

Summary: The Friends of Eureka Park is officially 10 years old. It has a geographical focus on just one, very specific place, Eureka Park, which it hopes to protect, preserve and improve. The group also has a committee but it is made up of ageing members who are concerned

about the continuation of the group and are struggling to get any new active involvement, despite a leafleting campaign. It has have stopped producing a newsletter and does not has its own website. Despite this, it has two notice boards in the park and joint projects with the local council, the Magic Attic group and Groundwork have helped to keep the group going. They have previously gained project funding in order to produce both a booklet and a DVD working with, the Magic Attic and involving elements of historical research.

Charnwood Sunday Group

Charnwood Sunday Group was founded in 1995 by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, as a sub-group. Five other environmental interest groups were also founded in the 1990s, as well as nine historical interest groups and two groups with combined interests. The Charnwood Sunday Group draws volunteers from a wider geographical area, but which concentrates on conservation tasks throughout the Charnwood area. For example, one volunteer said that he came from Lichfield originally, but had lived in Leicester for several years. He had been doing conservation work for a number of years and with this group (the Leicester one rather than the Charnwood Sunday Group) since the 1980s. Interestingly there was another Leicestershire Conservation group out with the usual Sunday Group (when I attended as part of my participant observation) indicating some connection with other groups and conservation activities in other places. For example, this other Leicestershire conservation group meets more frequently and joins up with several different groups for different tasks throughout the year in various locations including the Charnwood Sunday Group in the Charnwood area. So there were more volunteers than usual for the Sunday Group. One volunteer at the conservation task I attended was there as part of the other group which travels more widely around the area carrying out conservation tasks:

“Once a month [we meet] by the cinema in Leicester and then we meet others by the task sites, it could be one of a number of sites around the area. We might visit each site once a year. We meet up and help out with various other groups. This is just one of them. We won’t be out with this group every task” (Interview, 2006)

By contrast, another volunteer stated that they were part of the actual Charnwood Sunday Group and always carried out conservation tasks in the same locality. This group is one of 16 environmental groups, which has links with other groups. Like many environmental groups, the Charnwood Sunday Group is affiliated with the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) and has links with various other conservation groups across Leicestershire, with different groups covering different sites across the county. The group previously used a minibus borrowed from Leicester Council however they no-longer have access to this.

The Charnwood Sunday Group carries out conservation tasks at the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust's nature reserves in the Charnwood area, which is in The National Forest. Therefore this group has a relationship with specific places within The National Forest. However, the volunteer that I interviewed said that it did not make any difference whether they were in The National Forest or not, they just got on with the tasks. Therefore although the group has particular associations and links with places within Charnwood, this is not necessarily associated with being in The National Forest. The site where I met the group at, Lea Meadows nature reserve is very valuable because of the rare orchids that grow there. The Charnwood Sunday Group is one of the four environmental groups (plus 18 historical and five combined interest group) based in Leicestershire that were considered in this study.

Of the regular volunteers, there are some that have been attending the group continuously and others that have been attending for between

one and five years. There are usually between 12 and 20 volunteers at any one task, with a wide variety of people attending. The Charnwood Sunday Group is the only environmental group in this study which claims to have between 16 and 30 'members', although the individuals who make up these numbers are not members as such, because the group has no formal 'membership' structure. Six historical interest and historical and environmental combined interest groups also have between 16 and 30 members. I was introduced to a number of people on the task I attended in February 2006, at which there were about 12 to 15 volunteers. They had arrived in five or six cars and a white Leicester Wildlife Trust van. There is no cost to attend the group, with volunteers able to attend a conservation task as a one off or as a regular volunteer. The Charnwood Sunday Group is one of six environmental groups considered in this study that do not charge for people to attend their group. The Charnwood Sunday group meets on the second Sunday of every month, and is one of four environmental groups that said they meet monthly. The Charnwood Sunday Group is one of nine environmental groups in this study involved in regular outdoor activities. One volunteer told me that he and his wife come out to all the tasks and they had met at university when they went out to do some conservation work together. He works in an office on computer databases and web applications and enjoys being outdoors and doing something in comparison to being indoors with his job. On the day I attended this involved using tools, including bow saws and billhooks, a first-aid kit, kettles and other items.

The Wildlife Trust employee explained how he wanted the task doing. It was a brief explanation and a few of us said we had done a bit of hedge laying before. We were working on a hedge laying task, however as the trees were quite mature it took a long time to get through the trunk with a billhook and saw, and whole process seemed a bit haphazard with the Wildlife Trust employee using the chainsaw elsewhere. The saws and billhooks also seemed rather blunt. One group had some problems as their first trunk had snapped. Another tree became entangled with a

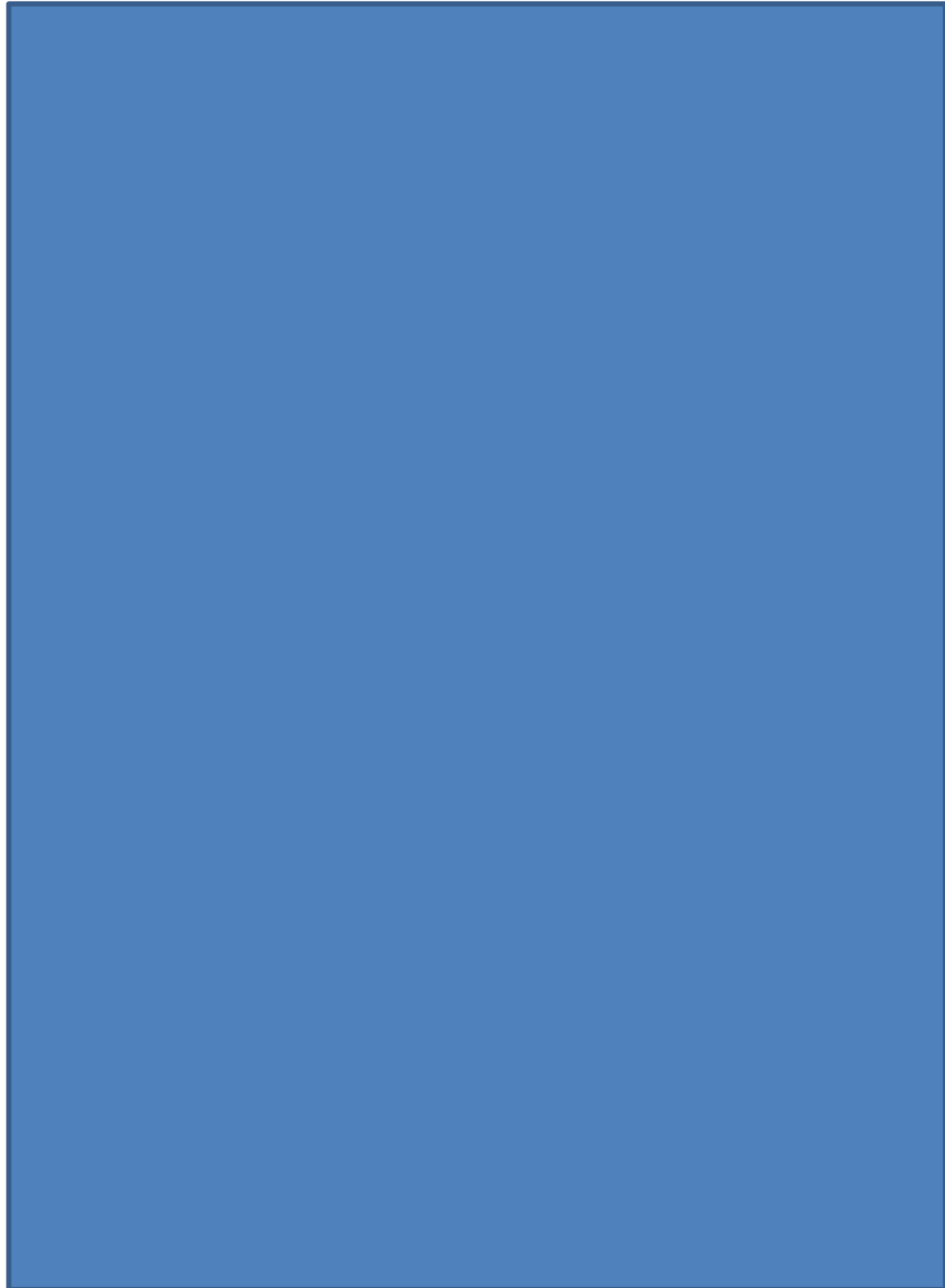
large adjacent tree and could not be disentangled and was left suspended. A regular volunteer came with the Wildlife Trust volunteer leader in the Trust van. She said she had borrowed the van from the other Wildlife Trust leader who kept it and used it as a work vehicle, indicating that it is likely the other leader is a paid employee of the Wildlife Trust rather than a volunteer leader. Therefore, this group has some professional as well as amateur involvement. An employed Wildlife Trust worker (again another professional worker involved with the group) who seemed to manage the reserve was also at the task attended and he explained that they had been hoping to mechanically move all the cut down brash lying about the place when the ground had dried out to make the task easier, but it had never dried out enough.

On a page of the Wildlife Trust's website (2011) it states about The Charnwood Sunday Group, that "Everybody is welcome whatever your ability or experience" although it is also specified that "Volunteers must be aged 18 or over" and "Vulnerable individuals and children aged 16 or over may only attend if accompanied by a responsible adult". Volunteers are also advised to ensure their "tetanus booster is up to date". During the task I attended, there was another 'new' volunteer there as well as me. The day I attended was quite pleasant and fresh and when I arrived the sun was shining. The group task was scheduled for 10am-2pm which was a much shorter day than any other conservation tasks I had previously been on, especially as some of that time would be taken up for lunch. Some time was spent standing around and talking, the group volunteers were friendly and welcoming. Six of the environmental interest groups, eight historical interest groups and one group with combined interests highlighted that they were openly encouraging new participants. The day's activities were curtailed at lunch time by persistent rain.

The Charnwood Sunday Group is part of the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust and has a page on its website and a slot in its conservation newsletter 'Billhooks and Biscuits' (see Figure: 4.35). It

does not produce any of its own individual publications, and is one of five of the environmental groups in this study which do not do this.

Figure 4.35: Extract from Billhooks and Biscuits, August 2005



'Billhooks and Biscuits' includes a description of the recent conservation tasks carried out by the group, personally thanks the volunteers who attended and advertises when the group activities take place.

Summary: The Charnwood Sunday Group is 18 years old and one of several conservation volunteer groups set up and run by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust. This particular group was included in this study due to its focus on the Charnwood area, which is in The National Forest. It usually has slightly more people attending its conservation tasks than the smallest groups in this study, with the group made up of a variety of different volunteers, individuals of which may vary each month. Additionally through its links with the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, there is usually some professional involvement in the group. It is easy enough for new, or one-off, volunteers to contact and become involved with new volunteers welcomed, provided with tools and given task instructions and support. The group meets regularly every month to carry out a range of conservation tasks and there is no charge for attending. The Charnwood Sunday Group is linked to other conservation groups through the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust, the Trust website, and their Billhooks and Biscuits newsletter, as well as being affiliated with BTCV.

The Magic Attic

Initially the group was set up in 1987 in order to rescue old copies of the Burton Mail newspaper produced in Burton on Trent, East Staffordshire. Eight of the historical interest groups investigated in this study were founded in the 1980s, as well as two environmental interest groups and one group with combined environmental and historical interests. However, only two of the historical interest groups studied formed in order to protect something. The Magic Attic holds archives of various newspapers local to the Burton Mail published from June 1898 - June 1977. It also houses various census information, parish registers, maps, books, items from local industries, photos, scanned plates, exhibition materials, searchable catalogues, publications (their own and other local publications) and their own newsletters. As in the case of

nine historical interest groups in the study, the Magic Attic group is involved in protection. For example, one volunteer described the main aim of the group as “To preserve local heritage, that’s what I would say anyway” (Interview, 2005). Additionally, the Magic Attic started out in order to rescue and protect a local newspaper, the Burton Mail’s archives:

“We didn’t know what was going to happen to them. They, erm, the Mail office was going to move to smaller premises and the premises they were moving to would not have held these newspapers” (Interview, 2005)

A couple of volunteers were busy categorising information from the Burton Mail papers in relation to war-time records. The volunteers continued with their own research in between helping others, including categorising archives and photos and adding the information to a searchable database. Generally once visitors were started off with the help of volunteers they all seemed to get on with their research on their own, just asking for assistance when they needed it. A volunteer showed me an area where all the old Burton Mail newspapers were archived. This group is one of eleven historical interest groups involved in researching and recording. Five environmental and one group with combined interests are also known to be involved with researching and recording.

I visited the Magic Attic once again in 2011. This time it was during a weekday when they had a special opening for a school to visit. The Magic Attic is one of only three groups (all historical interest groups), which volunteers referred to as delivering school visits. This visit had been arranged by the Open Spaces Manager from South Derbyshire District Council who is coordinating the Eureka Park Invisible Heritage Project, although the Friends of Eureka Park Group was not directly involved in this part of the project (also see the Friends of Eureka Park case study). The visiting class were from a local school, based on the

outskirts of Eureka Park, and they had walked up from their school to the Magic Attic to spend the morning there. Several Magic Attic volunteers had given up their time to come in and open up the archives especially for this visit and the Open Spaces Manager had arranged a donation to the Magic Attic as a thank you for doing this. A couple of Environmental Education staff from the Environmental Education Project at Rosliston Forestry Centre (I was one of these) were also helping with the visit. There were around 25 primary school children and six Magic Attic volunteers. The children were researching the history of Eureka Park and the Magic Attic volunteers had got out information relevant to this. The children split into smaller groups with their various adults and helpers and carried out research at the different research stations (newspapers, a searchable database, a short film of the park, photos, and a searchable database of photos). During the process they were allowed to print out various examples to take back to school for their project. Additionally, as in the case of seven historical interest groups in the study, the Magic Attic is also involved in creating exhibits:

“We do exhibitions, photo exhibitions and things like that and exhibitions of the work we have put together like the dead of World Wars One and Two. So that’s the sort of thing we do” (Interview, 2005)

The Magic Attic is a historical interest group based in South Derbyshire. Thirteen of the historical interest groups in this study are based in Derbyshire. It is located in the Sharpe’s Pottery building and can be accessed via a side door or via the main entrance through the kiln and up the stairs. There is a lift installed allowing disabled access. The Magic Attic is based over two rooms and two floors of the building. It has rows and rows of archives, tables and chairs and several micro-film readers. The Magic Attic group has links to various other groups including the Derbyshire Family History Society, Friends of Sharpe’s Pottery and Friends of Eureka Park. The group was also involved in refurbishing the Sharpe’s Pottery building after being approached by the

Council when they were looking for new premises. Nineteen of the historical interest groups in this study have links with other groups.

The Magic Attic has over 20 regular volunteers and so is similar in size to three other historical interest groups. It also has a committee, as do most of the groups in this study. Most of the volunteers have become long-term members of the group. The Magic Attic volunteers are generally over 50 years in age and more of the volunteers are women, however there is an even mix of gender amongst visitors to the archives. Children and younger people can visit the Magic Attic, however, the volunteers request that visitors under 14 years old are supervised. The Magic Attic encourages visitors who come from both the UK and abroad. When I have visited The Magic Attic everyone has always been welcoming and friendly. On my first visit to the Magic Attic, in 2004, I was asked to sign in as they keep a record of visitors and where they have come from. I was offered a cup of tea and shown round a corner to a side-area of the room where I was introduced to one of the volunteers who had said they would be happy to be interviewed. They seemed to provide tea and biscuits for all the volunteers and visitors that were in the Magic Attic. I visited The Magic Attic one evening in 2005 and found that it is open to anyone wishing to use the archives to carry out their own local historical research. Various volunteers and visitors came and went during the time I was there, most of them were known by the Magic Attic volunteers and a couple of new people were asked to sign-in, were shown around The Magic Attic and given advice where to start with their research. I later visited the Magic Attic again to use one of their micro-film. This time I turned up without arrangement as a general visitor to the archives might. A similar procedure to the previous visit followed – ringing the door-bell and being let in by one of the volunteers. Again I was asked to sign the visitor's book and provided with a cup of tea and biscuits. A volunteer also set me up on one of the micro-film readers and showed me how to use it. The Magic Attic group is open several times a week:

“Well when we first started here, because we were in another building before we came here, we didn’t open so much – Monday nights, Thursday afternoons and Thursday evenings... then as it got more popular and we got more people coming, we got to open for longer times, so that’s why that is as it is really” (Interview, 2005)

There are only three historical, and two environmental, groups in the study which meet this frequently.

The Magic Attic volunteers consider themselves as a grass roots community group. This volunteer explained how the Magic Attic got its name:

“We had a visit from, a lady from the British Newspaper Library... she’d looked at all the newspaper archives within the East Midlands area... I arranged to meet her one night at the car park at Swad you see [laughs]... she said, “Where are we going?” and I said “That snooker club, the club over there” and she was very suspicious... we walked into the dimly lit snooker club [laughs] and she says, “I, I am uneasy about this” ... she got up the stairs... and she said, “You are very mad or very dedicated, or both” [laughs]. She said, “I’ve never ever come to anything like this”... she gave us advice about how these things should be racked... we’d others coming in by then... and after we’d been there about two years this fella, well he walked up the stairs and he walked up and down and he says, local bloke, he says, “It’s a magic attic” and I says, “That’s it” and we took that name. It was spontaneous” (Interview, 2005)

As shown earlier in Figure 4.13 the sign outside the entrance to the Magic Attic shows the opening times. It also states that the Magic Attic is “an historical archive for serious research or gentle reminiscence”. This description the group has given itself highlights how the research carried out is considered serious and perhaps implies that the facilities and work carried out there are also ‘professional’. However, it also

highlights the openness of the group, encouraging local people to use the resources, who may otherwise be put off if they thought the group was just about serious research. There is no cost to volunteer for, or visit and use the Magic Attic archives although any donations are welcomed. Five of the historical interest groups in this study are free to attend. Many items are donated to The Magic Attic by members of the local community, for example photos, micro-fiche readers and memorabilia:

“A lot of them have been donated, yes. And through grants and things like that, projects that we have done” (Interview, 2005)

However, there have been some issues of people taking advantage of the group and their resources in the past and then using the information for their own personal benefit which has upset group volunteers and made them wary of this happening again. Despite this the atmosphere in the Attic remains open and friendly. The Magic Attic has also been supported through various grants and funding. The regular column for the Burton Mail newspaper boosts donations for the group. They have also been on the local radio, produce flyers and leaflets and have their own website. Twenty-six historical interest groups in this study said they produce publications.

Summary: The Magic Attic group is 26 years old and was originally set up to rescue a local newspaper's archives, which it subsequently moved from Burton on Trent, Staffordshire into Swadlincote, Derbyshire (both in The National Forest). The Magic Attic does not have a huge number of volunteers, but it is a thriving group and does have a large number of visitors. The group is proud of its positive relationships with the local community and is very open and welcoming to all visitors from across the world. The Magic Attic includes the archives from various newspapers and a selection of local memorabilia. The Magic Attic is involved with research, protection, exhibitions and school visits. It does not charge people to become involved with the group or to use the

archives, however it does welcome donations. The group is promoted and communicates via the local paper, radio and various leaflets and flyers. It also has links to various other local groups and has recently been involved in projects with the local council and local schools.

Conclusion

This chapter brings together information on the various characteristics of environmental and historical interest groups in The National Forest, considering the key themes, similarities, and individualities of these groups. In conclusion, there are a wide variety of environmental and historical interest groups in The National Forest area. The decades in which groups have been founded show peaks, which can be linked to wider influences and changes occurring at those times. The reasons for the groups forming are varied although some common themes can be identified – protection, course attendance, gaps in provision, significant dates and the decline of the mines - which tie in with other research. Almost all of the groups are run by a committee structure. The groups range vastly in size however most groups are made up predominantly or completely of older members which is causing concern amongst those groups. Groups are generally open and encouraging towards potential new members and tend to struggle to get members willing to commit their time. The groups are involved in a variety of activities including the gathering of data, increasing awareness and protecting sites or items. Contributions to the groups are generally made up of membership fees, donations and grants, however even with substantial funding success groups may still struggle for local support and new membership. Publications are used by groups for advertising themselves, generating revenue and sharing information. However the Internet is the most common form of communication across the groups and group websites are constantly developing and changing. Developing and maintaining relationships and links with other groups and the local community plays an important role in the groups' achievements, activities and success, which include links with other

groups within this study, The National Forest and groups and organisations not included in this study. The case studies examine in-depth examples of how different groups have developed and operate and the challenges they face. In the following chapter (5) individual groups volunteers are considered in more detail.

Chapter 5: Environmental and Historical Interest Group Volunteers

“... What did become evident in the nineteenth century was a wider appreciation of the countryside and from it grew the rosy, over-optimistic view of our rural heritage with which we are saddled today... Nature and landscape of course exist in reality, but our feelings for them, upon which the conservation ethic are based, are extremely personal and very varied” (Evans, 1997: 22)

Introduction

This chapter considers some of the individual volunteers who are involved with environmental and historical interest groups in The National Forest, examining their personal motivations and experiences. It considers early experiences that have shaped their environmental and historical interests, events that have catalysed their voluntary action and their motivations, involvement and contributions with the groups. As discussed in the literature review, a range of research has been carried out in relation to volunteers, including why people volunteer, the kind of people who volunteer and relationships between amateur volunteers and professionals working in the same fields, which is relevant to this chapter. Firstly, there is a general overview of types of volunteers found in this study, including the general demographics of the volunteers, their roles within the groups and local connections to the area. Secondly, the interviewees' early experiences are discussed including the influence of family and friends, social activities and rural and school experiences. This leads on to consideration of how their attitudes towards local history and environmental interests may have changed and how interests, or lack of interests, have developed into volunteering, through specific experiences/events (moving, retirement, unemployment and getting older) or lifelong interests. Finally, motivations, involvement and contributions are examined, considering personal benefits and wider responsibilities, commitment and relationships between amateurs and experts. Finally the complexities which make up individual volunteer's

experiences and motivations are highlighted through case studies focusing on four of the volunteers.

Who are these volunteers?

Of the 41 volunteers interviewed, over 90 per cent (38) were over 50 years old, with only two aged between 30 and 49 and just one under 29. This age spread is considered, from observations and comments by the volunteers, to be typical of the ages of volunteers across the groups. Twenty-eight of the interviewees were male and 14 were female, but it was not apparent whether this was representative of volunteers across the groups.

With regard to the involvement of those interviewed within the groups, over half (22) sat on the committee of a group. The large number of committee members involved in the study is due to the method in which the volunteers were identified and contacted. The groups were initially found through libraries, websites and leaflets, with the contact details of committee members more publicly available (as discussed in chapter 3). Some non-committee volunteers were interviewed following ethnographic participation at group meetings and events or via contact with other volunteers and groups. Therefore the study has generally focused on volunteers with a good general knowledge of how the groups were set-up, as well as their composition and main aims and activities. Additionally, over 40 per cent (17) of the interviewees were founder members of the groups, and therefore able to give an informed account of the group formation. Of these just under 20 per cent (eight) were both founder and committee members of the groups. Approximately 25 per cent (10) of the interviewees were volunteers who were neither founder nor committee members.³⁰

³⁰ One interviewee did not disclose this information regarding their volunteering.

Of the volunteers who provided information on their origins, just over half (21) of the interviewees were local people (defined as originally coming from the local area) and just over a quarter (12) had moved into the area from elsewhere. This is in contrast to the study by Fielding (2000) where those involved in events tended to be non-locals. Indeed the reasons behind both local and non-local involvement in local volunteering will be considered in this chapter. Of the 'local' interviewees, 15 were committee members, 14 were founder members and eight were both founders and committee members. Of the interviewees that had moved to the area, seven were committee members, three were founder members and only one was both a founder and a committee member. Therefore, of the volunteers interviewed, a higher proportion of those involved with local history and environmental interest groups were from the local area and additionally a higher proportion of the local volunteers interviewed were also founder members. However a similar number of local and non-local interviewees were on committees (eight and six volunteers, respectively).

The Significance of Early Experiences on Volunteering

One of the reasons for those interviewed becoming involved in environmental and historical interest volunteering was due to childhood influences. Many of the interviewees referred to significant early experiences or memories relating to the environment or local history. In some cases, these were positive and instigated their interest in these areas. For others, their early experiences were negative, resulting in an initial lack of interest. Sixteen of the volunteers mentioned positive early experiences relating to the volunteering they are now involved with. From these interviews it is possible to identify that key early childhood and teenage environmental and historical interest experiences for the volunteers were: family influences, development of hobbies and outdoor pursuits with friends, access to the countryside and memories of school.

Family Influences

Seven volunteers referred to family members introducing them to their local environment or history. These introductions included links to the careers of those family members, outdoor activities and gender roles. The relevance of family was mentioned by both environmental and historical interest volunteers. For five of the volunteers interviewed family members had influenced their interests in the environment and local history from a young age. Extracts from both interviews 17 and 1 illustrate a link between the type of employment of these male volunteers' grandfathers/fathers and their developing interest:

"Ever since I was a boy, my grandfather used to be a game keeper and I used to go walking across the fields with him..." (Interview 17, 2007: Male, Environmental Group Photo Librarian)

"I was born on the Thames. My father was a river pilot for 37 years and I had a strong interest in the local region... I moved away from home at 18... I used to do a lot of cycling... so I was interested in what was around me" (Interview 1, 2004: Male, Environmental and Historical Group Founder)

The careers of these influential male figures are contrastingly in rural and urban locations, although both involve access to 'natural' areas and both interviewees also mentioned their involvement in outdoor activities – walking and cycling. We can consider the relevance of such experiences in relation to Christensen *et al* (2000)'s research on children in the north of England which found that children's senses of home and belonging are temporally and spatially enacted, with belonging and identity a fluid and dynamic movement in, out and around the home.

A gendered (male), parental, influence is also highlighted by two female volunteers (interviews 19 and 31), although it was not linked to their fathers' careers:

"I think it was really going out with my dad you know and him showing me things. We'd sort of go out into the local sort of, you know where we lived was on the edge of the local countryside so we could go out for walks and look out for birds and trees and stuff and just doing it that way really" (Interview 30, 2008: Female, Environmental Group Member)

"I can't remember a time whenever we went anywhere when my father didn't tell us about where we were... about buildings and their history... how to read the landscape in the Lake District... it's always been there" (Interview 19, 2008: Female, Historical Group Secretary and Founder)

Following these early landscape experiences with her father, the above female volunteer went on to be involved with a local history group. In Interviews 31 and 17 there are again references to walking. So, the above five volunteers all refer to male influences in relation to their developing interests with the outdoors. This is somewhat in contrast to the results of Kong's (2000: 261) research, which showed that it was especially mothers who spoke about their children's experiences with nature - in relation to health, recreation and growing up to be 'robust, well-adjusted adults'.

The two male volunteers (interviewees 9 and 11) refer to the 'tales' told by both males and females - their parents and granny/work colleague, respectively, in relation to these early influences and experiences. Both individuals went on to become volunteers for local history groups:

"And even as a kid I was always interested in the tales me mum and dad used to tell me... I was interested from a very young age" (Interview 9, 2005: Male, Historical Group Member and past-Chair)

“Well I suppose there again, this story me granny used to tell me about this man called Mexican Joe, who was an itinerant conjuror and he was murdered in one of the clay holes. Another thing, when I was an apprentice at the garage a fellow used to tell me, when we used to sit at tea breaks and sort of tell us stories about this group who used to make films in Swad you see” (Interview 11, 2005: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

It is apparent that the predominant family influences on these volunteers' developing interests came from the male family members, with interviewee 9 mentioning the influence of both his mother and father, and only Volunteer 11 talking of a solely female family influence (but also referring to the influence of a male work colleague). Of the volunteers who mentioned these male-only influences, two were themselves male (Interviewees 17 and 1) and two were female (Interviewees 19 and 30). A further male volunteer (Interviewee 9) was the only volunteer to mention both parents as influences on his developing interest. These generational influences can be considered in relation to Atkins *et al* (1998)'s idea that, subsequent generations forge their identities, how they see others, and themselves, via the cultural feedback loop of previous landscape representations. Of these volunteers highlighting parental influences, two were from environmental interest groups, three were from historical interest groups and one was involved in a group with both environmental and historical interests. There are volunteers from all categories of groups that were positively influenced by male family members in their interests. Two of these environmental volunteers (Interviewees 17 and 30) and one environmental and historical interest volunteer (Interviewee 1) also linked their interest to the physical outdoor activities of walking (two) and cycling (one).

Activities

Specific activities were also mentioned as an introduction to interests in the environment and history. Some of the volunteers mentioned environmental and historical interests developing through social activities with friends, more outdoor activities (such as camping), and exploring 'junk shops' and campaigning. These youthful interests were mentioned without the influence of family members. Complex relations between children and nature include mythical representations of children and representations of nature that reflect gender and power relations (Aitken, 2001). Indeed, there is still a predominance of gendered, male influence where the activities are referred to in a social sense.

This environmental interest volunteer (Interviewee 18) refers to watching wildlife indoors, on the TV, and outdoors as a male-gendered activity:

"I just grew up fascinated by watching wildlife programmes on TV... and all the sort of bird watching stuff lads go through" (Interview 18, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Member, previously in various roles)

Another male volunteer (Interviewee 39) developed his interest through joining in with an environmental social activity, also with a male friend:

"Right, well when I was about thirteen years old, I was at school, and a friend of mine said to me said that he was going to look at some butterflies, some local butterflies, and I thought oh what an odd thing to do, but I went because he was my best friend... I liked being out in the countryside and seeing the butterflies and the wild flowers captivated my interests when I was very young... in those days people collected butterflies, you know if you had a butterfly book... everyone did, so I started off and caught butterflies in an onion bag, bright orange, and kept them in a cigar box. Looking back I don't know if it was worse

catching butterflies or having a cigar box..." (Interview 39, 2008: Male, Environmental Group, Local Group Chair)

Jones (1997) suggests that such 'natural places' may be associated with childhood memories of spaces away from adult control. Another volunteer (Interviewee 6), who became a historical interest, rather than environmental, volunteer again makes a reference to a male-dominated, outdoor culture - cycling and climbing:

"I just managed to get in with a group of lads who wanted to go out. So we cycled out to the countryside and eventually when we could get transport we went climbing" (Interview 6, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder Member and Chair)

In fact, most volunteers, such the following man (Interviewee 31) who mentioned early countryside social activities and interests, went on to become involved in environmental interest groups:

"I used to go out camping and walking and that sort of thing... with lots of trees and grass and things out there and that was about as far as it went" (Interview 31, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Founder, Chair and Project Officer)

There were exceptions, however. This local history volunteer (Interviewee 37) does not mention any early experiences relating to the countryside and also unusually refers to an early, lone historical interest rather than activity as part of a social or family group activity:

"Well local history I suppose well, the preservation of things old has been something I have been interested in since a small child... for example when kids used to be doing things possibly more blatant than they should be I'd have me head stuck in junk shops looking for bits and bobs" (Interview 37, 2008: Male, Environmental-Historical Group Committee Member)

This volunteer (Interviewee 37), an older male, historical interest volunteer, he was involved in preserving historic artefacts from a young age, but further implies that this was not a usual activity for children at the time.

Another early activity that was only mentioned by one environmental volunteer was involvement in campaigning. This volunteer does not refer to whether they their campaigning as a social activity or they did it on their own:

“As a kid... getting involved in a campaign to save the environment near to where I lived... it was a one off. I wrote a letter to the paper, I then got people giving me frog spawn and stuff [laughs]. Well I didn’t know... where were the frogs going to breed? I had no interest in frogs [laughs]”
(Interview 22, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Coordinator)

Despite saying that he did not have an interest in frogs, following on from this he later became a volunteer for an environmental group.

Two environmental volunteers (Interviewees 18 and 39) both mentioned observing nature as a significant early activity. Often, access to ‘natural spaces’ is also associated with happiness and spiritual wellbeing (Simmons, 1993) and additionally Massey (2005: 137) has argued that: “‘Nature’, and the ‘natural landscape’ are classic foundations for the appreciation of place”.

All but one of the above six activities mentioned a link to the environment, although, one of these five volunteers (Interviewee 6), who speaks of environmental activities, has since become involved in an historical rather than environmental interest group. Additionally, all of the volunteers referring to early influential activities in relation to their current volunteering interests are male. Four of the volunteers talked of outdoor activities and in the case of at least three volunteers, these

activities are likely to have taken place in 'countryside' locations. Cycling was an early activity referred to by two volunteers (Interviewees 1³¹ and 6) and Volunteer 6 also said that he had previously been involved in climbing. Volunteer 31 also referred to camping as well as walking interests. Two of the volunteers talked of indoor activities - one discussed watching TV (likely to be in a private space/at home) and went on to be involved in environmental volunteering, the other discussed being in 'junk shops', therefore having taken part in an activity in an indoor, public space. The environmental volunteer who talked of his early, influential, campaigning experiences may have had both public (being given frog spawn/helping to save the local environment) and possibly private space (writing to the local newspaper) experiences.

Rural Experiences

Many of the family and activity experiences discussed so far refer to outdoor experiences, including rural experiences. This exposure to, and early experiences of, the rural may span a range of time periods, including short visits, holidays and upbringing. As highlighted by Thomas (1996), town dwellers may express nostalgia for the countryside through countryside holidays and gardening. Cresswell (2004) suggests that the countryside is often seen as problem-free, tranquil and away from the problems of urbanity, and Halfacree (1997) argues that images of the rural may relate to ideas of 'escape' from an unattractive urban to a 'timeless' countryside. Volunteer 6 stated that, he did not live in a rural area and that his interests developed through visits to the countryside to participate in outdoor recreation with friends:

"Well, with being born in Leeds and everything, the woollen industry, I mean there were sixteen mills down the valley where I was born and everybody worked in the mills or the mines, so it was a pretty dirty and

³¹ As discussed in the previous section

dismal environment... I just managed to get in with a group of lads who wanted to go out” (Interview 6, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder Member and Chair)

Interviewee 6 then moved to the area now known as The National Forest and developed a career involving introducing young people from other industrial areas to outdoor pursuits. His geology and pottery collecting interests developed at the same time and then led onto archaeology interests in retirement. In contrast to the volunteer number 6, who mentions journeying from an urban location to participate in rural social activities with friends, another local history volunteer (Interviewee 4) moved back to rural England, to spend his childhood years in a small village, where not only the countryside, but the buildings within it, captivated his interest. He later went on to volunteer for a village museum:

“For some years I was out in the West Indies so when I came back the countryside was relatively new to me and I remember that we stayed at a little village in Somerset with a castle a stone’s throw away and that’s my first memories of playing, well as a six year old and then later on as a ten year old around the castle and getting interested in the built environment as much as the countryside... as much as the nature side... I like the built environment...” (Interview 4, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Past-President)

There are also volunteers who, rather than through the process of discovery initiated by a move or a visit, were brought up in rural locations and felt that the countryside has always been a part of their lives. Two female interviewees describe similar experiences, with Interviewee 26 going on to volunteer for a group with historical and environmental interests and Interviewee 13, the youngest volunteer interviewed, recently joined up as a conservation volunteer:

“Well I’ve always been interested because this is a village. We are open to the countryside and I’ve always grown up in it and it has been part of my life all the time” (Interview 26, 2008: Female Environmental and Historical Interest Group Member)

“I live in a village, a sort of rural area anyway and I was always outdoors, whether... at the local park or local water trust or something...” (Interview 13, 2006: Female, Environmental Group Member)

Interviewees 4, 26 and 13 all refer to the village experience, with two of these volunteers going on to become historical interest volunteers, and the other becoming an environmental volunteer.

School Experiences

As well as experiences of upbringing, leisure activities and rural locations, schooling was mentioned by eight volunteers as a key early influence on interest or disinterest in the environment and history. In comparison to the family and social interests that were mentioned more by environmental than historical interest volunteers, only one environmental and two historical interest volunteers mentioned school experiences as a positive early influence on their decisions to join environmental or local history groups.

Interviewee 29 was the only environmental volunteer to recall an environmental interest (in birds) developing during their time at school:

“I used to live in County Durham close to a seagull colony... also going back a bit I mean when I passed the 11+ and went to grammar school and there was a bird watching society at the grammar school I was sent to so I joined that” (Interview 29, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Member)

While this was the only environmental volunteer who had a school experience that encouraged his interests, in the late nineteenth century, nature walks and rambles were central to the general instruction of natural history as part of the formal and informal curricula at a range of British schools (Matless *et al*, 2010). However, there have been inconsistencies in the quality of environmental education in the UK, with ecology and environmental studies additionally suffering from being considered as 'soft' science (Hale and Hardy, 1993).

Additionally, five historical interest volunteers reported less positive school experiences and it is apparent that school and history at school were not always something that all volunteers found interesting or enjoyable:

"At school I was never really interested in history... it was all dates and figures..." (Interview 2, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

Interestingly, in a recent study of school history lessons (in Greece) Tamisoglou (2010: 478) also found that many pupils developed a dislike for history and suggests that the words that first came to their minds in relation to 'school history' ('dates', 'names', 'too many events', 'talking and talking', 'boring', 'difficult', 'wars', 'battles', 'revolutions', 'too much reading' and 'very long texts') could be indicators of the reasons why participants did not enjoy their history lessons:

"And because it was just a series of dates, really it didn't get over to you the importance of it..." (Interview 20, 2008: Male, Historical Group Treasurer)

"I've always had an interest in history since I left school. I mean I hated it at school, always learning dates. Whereas... I have always had an interest in steam engines... since the age of about three I think"

(Interview 41, 2008: Male, Historical Group Member with Education Role)

These three volunteers (Interviews, 2, 20 and 41) all refer to history at school as being about learning dates. Volunteer 14 was also critical of school, principally about its lack of local history:

“When I was at school, history was the most boring subject... perhaps it was the way it was taught... now local history is very interesting... I don’t think there was anything to do with local history in the curriculum when I was at school...” (Interview 14, 2007: Male, Historical Group Founder Member)

Volunteer 11, who later founded a local history group, sums up school history as something distant and unrelated to him:

“Strange really because I never really liked history at school... I mean school did nothing for me... they went on about places that meant nothing to me... history was somewhere else, it wasn’t around here” (Interview 11, 2005: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

In agreement with these last two quotes, Tamisoglou (2010: 478) also found that: “the majority of participants (201 pupils) suggested that the focus of school history should be on everyday life”. Additionally, Alabaú and Dilek (2009) found in their research on primary school students’ views on history (in Turkey), that students described history as about events and people in the past. Despite these negative school experiences, all of the above five volunteers went on to become local history volunteers.

In contrast, there were three historical interest volunteers (Interviewees 27, 8 and 35) who reported enjoying history at school:

“Well I’ve always been interested in history... I didn’t go to university, but if I had I would have done history... I can remember early lessons... I must have been quite young and I did O level and A level” (Interview 27, 2008: Female, Historical Group Secretary)

Interviewee 8 highlights that her teacher made the history lessons interesting and offered additional practical activities for the students to participate in:

“I have always been interested in history and when I was at school I joined a history society... I think the teacher we had, she was really good... she was very enthusiastic... she formed this out of school club and took us on little archaeological digs... different sorts of trips and things...her enthusiasm fuelled that” (Interview 8, 2005: Female Historical Group Founder)

Volunteer 35 also enjoyed history at school, stating that it was one of her ‘favourite subjects’, along with English (Interview 35, 2008).

There was no noticeable difference in the age range of volunteers who had positive and negative school experiences of history, although all the negative school experiences were mentioned by male history volunteers and all the positive school history experiences by female history volunteers. One of the five male historical volunteers (Interviewee 2), who spoke of a dislike of history at school did however, find that his initial dislike of school history lessons was transformed through a change in teacher and teaching styles:

“We all imagined ourselves in various roles... I was immediately caught by this. I thought this is something I can identify with... having thrown away the way I’d learnt everything for the last two years, for this new view of history. And I was absolutely riveted by it” (Interview 2, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

When history became something this interviewee could identify with he became interested in it. He later went on to become an industrial history group volunteer founder and chair.

Cussons (2000) suggests that, in the 1950s, a growing affection for old industrial machines and transport systems emerged with some quick to claim it gave overgrown school boys the chance to 'play at trains'. This may link to the development of historical interests amongst the older male interviewees. In relation to the one environmental volunteer who spoke about joining a bird watching society at school, this may link to ideas regarding learning landscapes and the creation of outdoor learning environments in schools, which Adams (1993: 130) states can contribute to school days being the 'happiest days of our lives'.

Changing Attitudes

Changing attitudes towards environmental activities were highlighted by a number of volunteers. Indeed attitudes towards nature have continually changed and developed throughout history. Volunteers highlighted changing attitudes in relation to environmental activities during their lifetimes and discussed changes in attitudes to history and in particular, local and industrial history. However, they did not speak directly about changes in attitudes in regard to specific historical interest activities, as in the case of the environmental volunteers.

Three environmental volunteers mentioned changes in their attitudes towards environmental activities. There was no similar reference made by any of the historical interest volunteers, although the negative school experiences mentioned in the previous section implies that their individual views did change. The history referred to in relation to volunteering is about local history, and for the volunteers, history at school did not seem to include local history. So in the case of the history volunteers their changes in attitude are more about experiencing a different kind of history involvement that they were not aware of at

school. King and Clifford (1985) highlighted that 'roots', are to many, of psychological importance with overlays of social and economic history embodied in our landscape and cultural heritage and Trinder (2000) suggests that voluntary effort in local industrial history peaked in the late 1960s. This may explain why this local form of history, seen as more relevant and interesting to the volunteers than the general history they were taught about at school, also became more prominent when they were older.

The changes in attitudes to environmental activities were not linked to any particular public campaigns or experiences by the volunteers, such as when in 1963, Nature Week promoted nature trails and the education of children and the public about appropriate behaviour 'in the field' (Matless *et al*, 2010: 107). The volunteer (Interviewee 39) who spoke of being captivated by going out butterfly collecting with a friend at the age of thirteen went on to say:

"... As time went on the [butterfly] collecting gave way to conservation. So as so many... I mean nowadays so many people come into conservation through universities and the like but in those days that didn't occur" (Interview 39, 2008: Male, Environmental Group, Local Group Chair)

Volunteer 39 suggests that, when he was younger, environmental interests and involvement tended to develop through collecting and that today, younger people's environmental interests are more likely to be channelled through formal education, rather than through involvement with hobby activities. Indeed, he states that his initial interests in collecting developed into what are now his interests in conservation.

There were also several comments regarding changing social attitudes and environmental activities. For example, again volunteers 39 and 23 mentioned collecting. In the nineteenth century, there were increasing concerns about the numbers of visitors to the countryside and warnings

about species becoming rare through removal and damage (Sheail, 1976) and since 1954 it has been illegal to take the eggs of most wild birds (Protection of Birds Act 1954). Indeed, Volunteer 32 refers to collecting eggs (interestingly in relation to the years just after the 1954 Protection of Bird Act):

“In common with most people of my age group I did things like bird nesting and so going after birds’ eggs and things like that because this was the late 50s and early 60s and nobody thought there was anything wrong with it” (Interview 23, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Member)

Both these volunteers indicated that this was something that was done when they were younger, although it would not be approved of now. Indeed, it is now illegal to possess or control any wild birds' eggs taken, and, although it is not generally illegal to capture and collect butterflies, a number of species are specially protected and it is illegal to catch, handle or harm them without a license (Wildlife and Countryside Act, 1981).

The only female volunteer who mentioned changing attitudes referred to her experiences of attitudes towards gender roles and environmental activities. This female, environmental interest volunteer (Interviewee 6) spoke of her early involvement in the outdoor pursuits of walking and climbing, but indicated that such activities were, at the time, seen as more masculine:

“You couldn’t, if you were a girl, then, work for the Forestry Commission. If you were a girl you couldn’t even work on a farm or volunteer. I used to do a lot of hill walking and climbing... I mean now you can laugh... but then, I mean girls who did that sort of thing were thought of as a bit weird [laughs]” (Interview 6, 2007: Female, Environmental Group Chair)

So, although this environmental volunteer engaged in outdoor activities as a young woman, she felt that she was considered 'weird' and reported a lack of opportunity to begin environmental volunteering at a young age due to being female. Even more recently, in a study by Hughes (1997) rural community event organisation was found to be a very, gendered experience, and this could be problematic for those that did not fit the traditional model. Additionally, as Murdoch (2003) states:

"... We should not assume that the rural simply 'reflects' underlying gender male identities; rather the assertion of manhood is made through and within rural nature" (Murdoch, 2003: 278)

This, particularly rural gendering, may explain why more male than female volunteers mentioned early experiences of outdoor activities as reasons for their interest in environmental and historical group involvement. In relation to changing gender roles, more recently Bye (2009) found that younger rural men (in Norway), unlike their fathers, do not base their identity on work and they are mostly willing to involve their girlfriends in hunting and snowmobiling activities.

Catalysing Voluntary Action

Seventeen of the volunteers interviewed considered a specific event or occurrence to have triggered their involvement in related volunteering, or catalysed the voluntary action. For example, as considered by Buchecker *et al* (2003), local participation may be due to local residents having increased responsibility for their local living space or if they are looking to satisfy a need for identification and integration. Indeed, as summarised by Rochester *et al* (2010) three main perspectives of (any) volunteering can be considered as: altruistic volunteering to help the less fortunate, volunteering to address shared needs and common problems, and intrinsic - serious leisure - volunteering (examples include local history, heritage and rambling). The personal perspectives given by the environmental and historical interest volunteers in this

study on catalysts for their voluntary action will now be discussed and considered in relation to their altruistic, shared needs and intrinsic motivations.

As can be seen from some of the above comments on long-term interests and early experiences, some of the volunteers have had environmental and historical interests from a young age. Sometimes these interests have changed and developed, as in the case of the volunteer who mentions early experiences of the environment and later became involved with a historical interest group. However, none of the volunteers mentioned initial local history interests and then reported going on to become environmental volunteers. Those who reported having no previous engagements with environmental or history interests, prior to joining a history or environmental group had their interest prompted by a range of occurrences.

The occurrences most commonly mentioned in relation to joining environmental or history groups are moving, retirement, unemployment and getting older. Additionally, several volunteers referred to small things initiating the start of active volunteering. For example, Volunteer 33's interests started with picking up a leaflet about a group even though he initially had no previous knowledge or involvement in their particular focus:

"I picked up a leaflet on the group from the local library... I'd always lived in the countryside but never had anything to do with [that species]"
(Interview 33, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Chair)

Volunteer 18 was inspired to get involved through watching wildlife programmes on the TV, and he just suddenly decided to develop his interest in wildlife into doing something more active and helping the wildlife that he was so interested in:

“I remember sitting down one evening and watching TV, watching a wildlife programme and thinking it was about time I got off my backside and did something to help... practically do something about conservation, to help wildlife and so on. So virtually the next day I rang up...” (Interview 18, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Member, previously in various roles)

By the 1980s global environmental problems had caught the attention of the media, environmental TV programmes were attracting large audiences and community conservation had taken off (Goodwin, 1998). Rural leisure activities had also experienced rapid growth, with those relating to nature and natural heritage being of particular significance (Ilbery, 1998).

There are similar examples amongst local history volunteers. One volunteer’s (Interviewee 41) interests developed when the working men’s club he attended organised some oral history events and an historical group formed following the project, something which links into the reasons for group formation discussed in the previous chapter:

“... It started with a meeting at the working men’s club. Now the working men’s club organised some oral history about the mines because a lot of the blokes at the club are ex-miners. And one... ran a group for six weeks and then it sort of took off from there” (Interview 41, 2008: Male, Historical Group Member)

Volunteer 11, an extremely enthusiastic and key volunteer at an historical interest group, first became interested after speaking to a friend who was doing historical research and finding out that there was a source of information in the local vicinity that he was not previously aware of. He was inspired by a visit to this archive and went on to volunteer for the group responsible for it:

“And really about being inquisitive about what was in there I went in one afternoon, just to have a look. Hundreds and hundreds of newspapers stacked up on this floor lying everywhere...” (Interview 11, 2005: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair).

Whilst these male volunteers all highlighted specific events, others referred to life-cycle changes to explain their involvement in environmental and historical interest groups. Some of the main types of events highlighted by the volunteers in relation to instigating their volunteering will now be discussed further.

Lifelong Interests

Some volunteers reported having had a life-long interest in the environment and argued that this was what led them to becoming involved in local groups. For example, as discussed in the previous section (The Significance of Early Experiences on Volunteering) some volunteers talked of relevant childhood experiences and rural upbringings. In the case of Interviewee 17, he actually began actively volunteering when he was a teenager and his involvement with local environmental groups has been ongoing since then:

“... It started when I was very young... when I... first started work at the age of eighteen, I met somebody who was a member of [the group]³², it was through him that I joined” (Interview 17, 2007: Male, Environmental Group Photo Librarian)

The above volunteer is now a member of, and an active volunteer, for several environmental groups. Another environmental volunteer with life-long environmental interests had a wide range of conservation volunteering experience spanning several countries, which even involved setting up a nature reserve whilst living abroad:

³² Name removed for anonymity

“... I’ve always been interested in conservation and that... I’ve been married twice before and lived in different countries, Bahrain, Norway... When I was in Bahrain I helped start up a nature reserve... since I was three I have been watching badgers” (Interview 16, 2007: Female, Environmental Group Chair)

She is now an active reserve volunteer and the local reserve manager. A further form of long-term interest was shown by a conservation volunteer group leader (Interviewee 31), who reported always having been involved in the outdoors, but whose active conservation interest began through a promotional British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV) meeting in his area:

“I’ve always liked being outdoors... then when BTCV were setting up new groups in the area 15 years ago I went to the first meeting to try it out and it just blossomed from there” (Interview 31, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Founder, Chair/Project Officer)

Volunteer 34 was involved with a number of historical interest groups and when interviewed, also referred to an ongoing interest that has developed opportunistically:

“Well I’ve always been interested, well from the early 1990s in local history and through the model railway club in that two of the members were writing three books to do with local history and I helped with the research” (Interview 34, 2008: Male, Historical Group Member)

Of these with longer-term interests, Interviewees 17 and 16 (male and female, respectively) were involved in both an environmental group and in active conservation volunteering from early on, whereas Interviewees 31 and 34 (both male) were always interested in the outdoors and local history respectively and later became more actively involved with these interests through volunteering.

Moving

Three volunteers (two historical and one environmental) all mentioned moving house as pivotal to the development of their voluntary interests, although the details of this influence are very varied. In relation to moving to a rural area, Philo, *et al* (2003) highlight that acceptance in-migrants may be stressful through lack of local support, although, Lawrence (2006) suggests that voluntary involvement can help develop a relationship with place and community. Indeed, interviewee 5 volunteered in the local museum as she wanted to get involved locally and find out more about the area:

“I moved to the area... and decided to get involved with some local activity. And the museum, the local museum seemed to be the most appropriate one...” (Interview 5, 2004: Female, Local History Group Chair)

Voluntary work by rural women has also been discussed as an important aspect of their community participation by Little (1997), who highlights that women ‘doing their’ bit is seen as central to the identity of rural community. Therefore volunteering may be used as a route for women moving into a rural area to be accepted into the local community. Indeed, interviewee 5 also adds:

“... This was partly... I should do something... the most appropriate thing and... that it would be useful, useful to place me... because it’s sort of an old mining community here. It’s quite a tight sort of community, there is a, a, a very strong sense of local history and involvement”

Volunteer 38, who moved to the area, became drawn into involvement through a chain of events, starting with a college leaflet (similar to the case of volunteer 33 above) being delivered through their door:

“We moved into this area just over 7 years ago. Within the first 12 months we’d had a little note pushed through the door from the, one of the tutors at Stephenson College... saying... would you like to come along to discuss anything you need in terms of training or interests... We spoke about the usual, about computer courses and art classes, and just before we finished I said, you know, how about local history. And the young lady took that to heart and the only class we did get was on local history... it all started with a move to a new area” (Interview 38, 2008: Male, Local History Group Volunteer)

As well as Interviewee 38 referring to moving, his involvement in active volunteering was also catalysed by his involvement in a local history course run by the local college.

Others became involved in volunteering on returning to their home area after a time away. One volunteer moved back to her home area following a divorce and wanted to start a new hobby with her new partner:

“... I came back to Burton and I was divorced and I met Neil³³ so we started new things... We went to Swad that was where this group met... and then they were short on the committee... and then I got to be Chairman [laughs]” (Interview 16, 2007: Female, Environmental Group Chair)

Volunteer 16’s quest for a new hobby led to early involvement in the committee and as Chair of an environmental interest group.

³³ Name changed.

Retirement

Retirement was mentioned as a prompt to involvement by six volunteers (Volunteers 32, 6, 41, 35, 8 and 1). As with Volunteer 16, Interviewee 32 returned to Swadlincote, in this case, on retirement, after a time away and was also motivated to become involved with a local group by what she regards as the ‘terrible’ deterioration of the local park:

“I finished work and we came down, back down to Swadlincote because obviously that is where the family were... when I first went on to the park, soon after we came back, I was absolutely devastated when I saw the state of it. It was absolutely in a terrible condition, which you might well imagine...” (Interview 32, 2008: Female, Local Combined Interest Group Founder)

So, in the case of the above volunteer, like many others, it was a combination of reasons – retirement and specific prompts, which instigated her active volunteering. Retirement was also identified by Volunteer 6 as a prompt for involvement and was specifically inspired by watching a popular TV programme (also see quotes by Volunteers 8 and 18 previously) – to join an archaeology group:

“...Once I retired I decided I wanted a complete break... I had done a little Geology and Time Team was quite popular on the television and I’d one or two friends who were interested in collecting bits of pottery so I thought I’d give it a go. So I started studying archaeology” (Interview 6, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

This volunteer, interviewee 6, was interested in doing something completely different to his previous work although, he does also go on to say that he had shown some interest in this area of activity previously.

Another interviewee (Volunteer 41) chose to volunteer for the local industrial heritage site as he was retired, it was close to where he lived, and the engines interested him:

“... Having a Victorian steam driven... works down the road here I was sort of drawn to the restoration of it. I mean I have been retired for years now and by the time I was 50 I was lucky enough to be able to afford to do it. I’ve been playing at restoring... for years and that’s how I came into it through an interest in steam and engineering” (Interview 41, 2008: Male, Historical Group Member with Education Role)

Other opportunities linked to retirement included a chance to become more involved in local village life and more active in protecting local areas, although Volunteer 1 also implies that, by living in a village, he could not avoid having some involvement with local activities:

“I was running a small business... we got rid of that... I began to have a lot more time to get involved in various local activities... and I wasn’t aloof from the village at all; you can’t be in a village... then... a group come together... to defend the village...” (Interview 1, 2004: Male, Environmental and Historical Group Founder).

For several volunteers, their involvement became more intense following retirement as they had more time to volunteer. Indeed, (Bernard, 2000: 139-40, cited in Davis Smith and Gay, 2005) found that older age specific motivations for volunteering included: having more structured free time, continuing to use the skills they developed through work and exploring new opportunities that were previously inaccessible due to the demands of work. Interviewee 35 was involved in a writers’ group, but then her volunteering developed into recording and publishing information on the area’s local, industrial mining history:

“I tried to retire... wasn’t very successful so I decided to start a writers’ group, we had what several months, a year, as a writers’ group but then

we decided that because ours was a mining area... that we ought to before it was all gone and before all the people were gone we ought to interview them and find what life was like” (Interview 35, 2008: Female, Historical Group Founder and Secretary)

Finally, Volunteer 8 had to retire and was looking for something new to fill her time:

“... I had to give up work... I really enjoyed my job and I thought this is going to be a bit difficult, but this has replaced work and it is so enjoyable, so enjoyable. Meeting all the people and helping, it’s just addictive [laughs]” (Interview 8, 2005: Female, Historical Group Founder)

One environmental and historical interest volunteer and four historical interest volunteers, but only one environmental group volunteer, mentioned retirement as a trigger for their volunteering. This could be due to the potentially more physical aspects of environmental volunteering, for example through the carrying out of conservation tasks.

Unemployment

In addition to retirement, a couple of the interviewees referred to having more time to volunteer due to unemployment. Gittins (1993: 185) highlights, that community-based conservation projects attract ‘all sorts of people’, with the contribution of the unemployed meriting a ‘special mention’. For example, Volunteer 28 highlights how her husband’s unemployment not only gave them more time but also constrained their joint budget, so they looked for something to do that would not be costly:

“Well, it was back about 1985-6 and I think my husband was unemployed at that time and we were just looking for something to do

that wouldn't cost too much at the time so we looked on the Internet... or might have been on the television and found out about the BTCV and we have always been interested in wildlife and my husband has always been interested in birds so we started going on these conservation holidays" (Interview 28, 2008: Female, Environmental Group Secretary)

Volunteer 12 also reported being unemployed and looking for an activity to fill his time:

"I was unemployed and I found out there was a [conservation] week group, so I joined it so I had something to do. I was interested in helping to save the planet" (Interview 12, 2006: Male, Environmental Group Member)

Volunteers may decide to become involved to gain skills, training or progress their career (Naturenet, 2004; National Trust, 2003) and Rochester *et al* (2010) highlight how government initiatives may encourage the unemployed to get involved with volunteering in order to increase their chances of gaining jobs. However, Rochester *et al* (2010) also discuss how studies have found that it is actually the employed who are more likely to volunteer than the unemployed, with those who are self-employed and part-time workers most likely to volunteer. The two environmental volunteers who referred to unemployment also mentioned having existing interests in wildlife and saving the planet. Unemployment was not mentioned as a trigger to volunteering by any historical interest or combined environmental and historical interest group volunteers.

Getting Older

Another key prompt in relation to becoming involved with local history and environmental groups was just getting older and starting to develop interests in these areas. Five volunteers (Volunteers 3, 23, 7, 37 and 14) referred to an increasing awareness of environmental or history

issues with age. In relation to this, Rochester *et al* (2010) found that the relationship between age and volunteering was complex, although volunteers in England are more likely to be under twenty, or between thirty-four and seventy-five years old.

For one environmental volunteer (Interviewee 3) it was about starting to ask questions, both about the environment and local history:

“... As time went on I began to ask questions, not only about what I saw, but why it was there. And that got me into the landscape and really the local history” (Interview 3, 2004: Male, Environmental Group Member)

Another environmental volunteer (Interviewee 23) also mentioned starting to think about the environment more as he got older. In line with a general increasing environmental awareness:

“... I mean it was just the countryside when I was young because obviously it was just there, you don’t actually think about it as a child, it was just your environment, but obviously its, erm, the environment has actually gone up the agenda of most people in the last twenty years so and obviously you feel different about it as an adult than you did as a child” (Interview 23, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Member)

Volunteer 7 mentioned increasing historical concerns, as well as links to memories as she grew older:

“It’s only in later life really that I’ve got memories of... it’s funny really but not really when you are young, you don’t really think concerns about local history, it is as you get older...” (Interview 7, 2005: Female, Historical Group Member)

Likewise, Volunteer 37 commented on his realisation of the importance of the past and preservation as he grew older:

“I think, you know, as you get older you realise the importance of the past and the need to preserve what is left of it” (Interview 37, 2008: Male, Historical and Environmental Group Committee Member)

Another historical interest volunteer (Interviewee 14) referred to his interests developing with increasing age and the influence of TV programmes:

“Well, I think it is something that comes as you get older. As a young person you are not so interested, and I think it has been fired up by the programmes on the television...” (Interview 14, 2007: Male, Historical Group Founder Member)

In contrast, for Interviewee 36, becoming a volunteer was more to do with having more time as his children got older:

“I think I got more interested by the time my daughters had left school, by the time I’d got over the potty stage and the boyfriend stage you get to that stage in your life where you are looking for other things to do” (Interview 36, 2008: Male, Historical Interest Group Committee Member)

Interestingly, Rochester *et al* (2010) highlight that older people may have more spare time and altruistic motivations resulting in volunteering, but that also that older generations may become more demanding in relation to what they want to get out of their volunteering. This leads on to discussions of motivations, involvement and contributions in the next section. Additionally, changing relationships between place, environment and history that have resulted in active environmental and historical interest volunteering are also relevant to discussions on identity, which will be considered further in the next chapter.

Motivations, Involvement and Contributions

Themes that have come out of interviews with the volunteers regarding motivations, experiences and attitudes are that specific triggers for volunteering tend to be based around personal benefits and wider responsibilities. Rochester *et al* (2010: 126) discuss how theories on volunteer motivations are based on psychological and sociological perspectives. However, in looking at what actual volunteers said in relation to their motivations, the most common reasons found by Rochester *et al* (2010) were helping other people (53%), the cause being important to them (41%), meeting people and making friends (41%), the volunteering being connected to the needs and interests of family or friends (29%), links to their philosophy of life (23%), because their friends or family did it (21%), and in order to learn new skills (19%). Following on from this, levels of commitment amongst the environmental and historical interest volunteers in The National Forest are discussed below.

Personal Benefits and Wider Responsibilities

The main motivations behind the volunteers' involvement can be categorised into personal benefits and wider implications of volunteering. Personal benefits amongst the volunteers in this study are generally linked to meeting others, enjoyment/relaxation and personal development. Broader motivational factors are based around improving the environment and creating opportunities and resources to benefit others. Carlo *et al* (2005) found that it is the agreeable and extrovert individuals who are more likely to be motivated towards volunteering, seeking social stimulation and responding to the needs of others, which may be why – as can be seen below – these 'different motivations' are often mentioned by the same volunteer.

Several volunteers referred to the personal benefits of their volunteering. For two male volunteers, a key element of their

experiences has been about learning and personal development. Interviewee 14 has developed new skills and the volunteering has motivated him to attend a relevant course and participate in further study:

“... I find it of interest. I think even the country’s history I find more interesting now... it’s made me do things possibly I wouldn’t have done otherwise... I wanted to build a website... I worked on that... took photographic... course... It’s given me that impetus to go and study”
(Interview 14, 2007: Male, Historical Group Founder Member)

Rochester *et al*’s (2010) volunteer typology of ‘education’ includes assisting others in learning new skills, although it is not clear in these comments whether any other volunteers were directly involved in helping these individuals to learn new skills. Volunteer 25’s learning has been through attending group meetings and meeting other group members. He has also started thinking about his own development opportunities through the possibility of writing a book:

“I mean it is a learning experience, you meet other people and there are interest talks and speakers... it would be very nice to write a history of the village and its locality...” (Interview 25, 2008: Male, Historical Group Founder Member)

For five volunteers (Interviewees 27, 31, 17, 23 and 28), volunteering offers various health benefits, including keeping them mentally and physically active and relaxed. For example, for interviewee 27 (2008: Female, Historical Group Secretary) her volunteering keeps her mentally active “It keeps the grey cells ticking over...”, while for Interviewee 31, it keeps him “sane”. Along with this mental benefit, he also refers to physical activity and the enjoyment of being outside:

“Yes it probably keeps me sane! ... I do tend to be in the office a lot more but it is a good source of physical exercise... I enjoy life a lot more

if I go on a walk... suddenly there are lots of sorts of trees, flowers and grasses..." (Interview 31, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Founder, Chair and Project Officer)

Indeed, Simmons (1993) has highlighted that access to 'natural spaces' is associated with happiness and spiritual well-being. Several other volunteers also mentioned physical and emotional benefits and motivations. For Interviewee 17, participating in an environmental interest group evokes a range of positive emotions as well as a physical experience:

"It's just a sense of enjoyment, of relaxation and just knowing that each time you go out things will be different, you will see something you've not seen before or see it in a different light or whatever... I feel relaxed, quite excited, depending on what I have seen really, it's a mixture of feelings... it's physically going out... it's getting into the fresh air" (Interview 17, 2007: Male, Environmental Group Photo Librarian)

Volunteers 23 and 28 described similar feelings:

"Well simply apart from just somewhere to visit that is not towns or away from your own place well obviously it has a good psychological effect on people who are out in the countryside to be seeing plants, animals and so on..." (Interview 23, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Member)

"... I think it is lovely to get out in the fresh air and see the wildlife in the countryside" (Interview 28, 2008: Female, Environmental Group Secretary)

However, most volunteers have multiple motivations for their volunteering which combine personal benefits and wider responsibilities. Indeed, Rochester *et al* (2010) suggest that motivations are complex and may change. This quote by Volunteer 30 is a good

example of how volunteers may have multiple motivations and experiences:

“Well I suppose I always look at it now from the point of preserving the diversity of species as a lot of the work I do is very species focused... a lot of it now is saving those species from disappearing whether locally or... if you lose a species you know about you are losing a lot more species you don’t know about. For me and my family it is about getting out and relaxing and getting away from the daily grind... it is complex...”
(Interview 30, 2008: Female, Environmental Group Member)

The above five volunteers who refer to the benefits of being outside in the countryside are all environmental interest volunteers.

These environmental benefits also lead on to other motivations in relation to the environment, including those of environmental protection. Four environmental group volunteers (Interviewees 13, 33, 12 and 16) and one historical interest volunteer (Interviewee 2) all refer to environmental protection as a motivation. For example, for Interviewees 13 and 33, volunteering is a way of protecting the environment or specific wildlife species (as with Interviewee 30) as well as bringing personal, social benefits:

“For me it’s good because it’s a chance to meet new people and it’s nice to try and enhance your local environment and try and protect it!”
(Interview 13, 2006: Female, Environmental Group Member)

“Well, they were here before we were and it’s up to us to look after them... it’s a social thing, we have walks, and I suppose one increased one’s knowledge of the countryside and wildlife all the time” (Interview 33, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Chair)

Interviewees 12, 16 and 2 are also motivated by helping the environment. Their motivations may also be linked to suggestions that

active local residents may see their involvement as a duty or responsibility, as discussed by Selman and Parker (1997). Interviewee 12 additionally refers to both the benefits for future generations, as well as helping the planet:

“It’s worthwhile, contributing to saving the planet for future generations. Day to day working doesn’t do anything long lasting!” (Interview 12, 2006: Male, Environmental Group Member)

This volunteer and group chair (Volunteer 16) also talks about the environmental and personal benefits of her volunteering, as well as suggesting that she was only aware that she could help in such a way through doing a lot of walking, and that there are other people who are concerned about the environment who do not realise they can help:

“... A lot of people moan that things are disappearing and things are different, but they don’t know they can help... I like doing it because I’ve done a lot of walking... I thought well that is better, I am still in fresh air, I am still doing me good, but doing the environment a lot of good” (Interview 16, 2007: Female, Environmental Group Chair)

Along with the above environmental interest volunteers, are historical interest volunteer (Interviewee 2) refers to protection of the local ‘environment’ and the extent to which he would be willing to go to secure its protection:

“... I feel that my role, my responsibility is to identify the implications of what people might be planning. I mean I don’t think I would want to lay down in front of a steam roller... a burning interest, I think it is, but how far I would go to progress or follow it really...” (Interview 2, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

Protection is also a motivation for historical interest groups volunteering in relation to the preservation of local history. Both the preserving of

history and the environment can be further related to saving places and providing information for future generations. This environmental volunteer (Interviewee 24) describes how she considers the environment as important for future generations:

If we don't we won't have... well, we won't have the same sort of world for my grandchildren and their grandchildren as we grew up in. Well it is something that has got to be done, yes... if we can put a... to this global warming lark and it has got to be a good thing..." (Interview 24, 2008: Female Environmental Group Founder and Chair)

Another historical interest volunteer (Interviewee 7), talks of the loss and importance of protecting history for future generations:

"Well because we've lost so much over the years through people not taking an interest and things could never be replaced because they have been destroyed. That, that information is lost, such a shame... well it's, it's basically just to keep it within, for me, within the family so that it isn't lost for my grandchildren" (Interview 7, 2005: Female, Historical Group Member)

It is interesting that both of the above volunteers who refer to preservation for future generations are female. Sharing and preserving for future generations can also be achieved through spreading awareness of local heritage to the public and local school pupils. This links in with suggestions by Roger (1987) that motivations for volunteering come from the need to offer alternative services or altruistic feelings of pride and pleasure. Volunteers 2 and 19 are motivated by wanting to share local history with the wider public and a keenness to do more:

"... So we have got a package of all the sites... along the trail... and we have made them fully accessible and interpretable to the public. If you are serious about this then you are serious about wanting to let people

know about what their heritage is then you should do it free of charge... I wrote a book... and I go round to schools giving slide shows and talks... We'd love to do more if we possibly could. But again it requires an expertise now, which I don't have..." (Interview 2, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

"... To get history a bit more appreciated in South Derbyshire..." (Interview 19, 2008: Female, Historical Group Secretary and Founder)

This fits in with Rochester *et al*'s (2010) typology of 'education' volunteering. So with regard to personal benefits and wider responsibilities, although these motivations can be split into two categories, they are often intertwined within individuals' overall motivation. Some volunteers' experiences have led to self-development which has then become an additional motivational factor. As well as mental stimulations, physical and emotional factors were key elements particularly in relation to being outdoors in the countryside. Environmental protection is also a motivational force, together with feelings of responsibility in relation to preserving and protecting for future generations and the wider public. Male and female volunteers from both environmental and historical interest groups referred to the personal benefits they gained from active volunteering with the groups.

Commitment

Level of commitment is something that was also mentioned by several volunteers, from heavy involvement to reducing or increasing involvement in relation to other life commitments. Connected to this, Rochester *et al* (2010) investigated theories that volunteers were more likely to stay longer if they were able to express personal values and saw the volunteering as part of their identity.

Volunteer 22, for example, refers to increasing involvement and responsibility:

“... Getting more involved it’s taken up more and more of my spare time [laughs] I’ve learnt a lot more. I’ve learnt new interests as well... I do quite a lot of talks and training courses for local groups of various descriptions, you know, to Wildlife Trusts or environmental groups, things like that. And do training courses for people to identify them and things like that...” (Interview 22, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Coordinator)

However, heavy involvement with a voluntary group can start to affect other parts of a volunteer’s life, as in the case of Interviewee 3:

“It can also sometimes damage your social life. I want to go out and other people want to do something else” (Interview 3, 2004: Male, Environmental Group Member)

With changing life commitments and circumstances, this can then lead to commitment having to be reduced again, as in the case of Volunteer 17 who had a change in his job:

“When I first started going I was just an ordinary member, and then at some point I joined the committee and helped to organise the various meetings and events and so on. And since then I went into a job that was much more pressurised and I just didn’t have time to do it so I am still a member of the group but I’m less active than I was now...” (Interview 17, 2007: Male, Environmental Group Photo Librarian)

Another volunteer (Interviewee 1) refers to ‘trying’ to wind down, implying that this might not always be easy to do:

“... The redevelopment... I am trying to wind it down but I am heavily involved in that” (Interview 1, 2004: Male, Environmental and Historical Group Founder)

In fact, we can see through this comment by Volunteer 16 that she is feeling pressure over the lack of a replacement to fill her role, and concerns about the possibility of the group folding if she reduces her commitment:

“You’ve got to find somebody to take it over from you. See, that’s where they have got me, it’s because I don’t want to be the reason the group folds... I have to keep doing it... they’ve got you then like that”

(Interview 16, 2007: Female, Environmental Group Chair)

So volunteering can take place at a range of levels and with different degrees of commitment, with the latter having an effect on, and being affected by, other life commitments. The implication of links between amateur and professional involvement are now considered.

Amateurs and Experts

Relationships between amateurs and professionals are relevant to volunteer motivations, involvement and contributions. As discussed by Geoghegan (2009), there can be some prejudices between so-called amateurs (enthusiasts) and professionals, with some amateurs suggesting that their much-loved pastime has been ‘hijacked’ by academia and some professionals not appreciating what the amateurs do.

Only six of the volunteers referred to having a profession connected to their voluntary interests and activities. All of the other 35 volunteers interviewed have amateur involvement unconnected to their career or which has developed after retirement. Interviewee 19 was a lecturer and her father was also a curator. She is now involved in (historical) consultancy work and continues to carry out research and produce publications:

“And I suppose it has become more professional because my dad was a self-taught curator really... I do research on my own and publish stuff... now I do legal consultancy work... when they have a legal case they don’t understand the historical background or they can’t read the documents or they can’t do the Latin and I do all this I sort out the historical background for them for those cases” (Interview 19, 2008: Female, Historical Group Founder Member and Secretary)

Historical interest volunteer (Volunteer 4) is involved in running a village museum as well as being a professional historian:

“... In the last twenty two years I have been involved in this museum, not in this building, but in this museum as a concept first and then as it has been developed... I give evening classes... the problem that lies in being a professional historian, in that I trained for it, you have to be very careful that you don’t get too critical... ” (Interview 4, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Past-President)

Interviewee 34, another historical interest volunteer, explains that he has published five books on the local history of the area:

“I am a published author of five books on local history in South Derbyshire...” (Interview 34, 2008: Male, Historical Group Founder)

So interviewee 34 might be considered an amateur publisher or expert by practice. Therefore sometimes it can be difficult to clearly distinguish between who might be considered an amateur and who might be considered a professional.

The above three volunteers, who can all be considered to have some sort of professional links to their voluntary activity, are all involved with local historical interest groups. Such involvement in both the amateur and professional spheres of historical and environmental interest can generate and strengthen amateur interests, as highlighted by Beckett

and Watkins (2011). Additionally, three of the environmental interest volunteers interviewed also referred to a professional environmental involvement. Firstly, there is Interviewee 30, who now works with the Wildlife Trust following on from a lifelong interest and relationship with the countryside and natural environment:

“... I am now sort of working and doing that sort of ecological stuff so it's, obviously the basic interest is still there, but there is more knowledge associated with it now I suppose it's more sort of technical stuff that I am dealing with, so it's not just a kind of hobby, it's work as well, so, like the stuff I do for the... society is in my spare time and I've got work stuff as well which is related so all of my life is that sort of environmental-ecological kind of stuff” (Interview 30, 2008: Female, Environmental Group Member)

Indeed, Lawrence (2006) highlights that there has been an increase in both environmental enthusiasts and professionals over recent decades. Volunteer 30's reference to her work involving more “technical stuff”, suggests that her paid work is less concerned with hands-on conservation and can be considered in relation to Bell *et al's* (2003) observations that professionals are usually more involved with environmental management than conservation. Another volunteer (Interviewee 31) had a career change after seven years of environmental volunteering and developed a professional involvement with the environment:

“I have actually changed my career totally... I've done all sorts of things... I was doing double glazing... when I started doing this and then after about seven years the council wanted to start a park ranger service in East Staffs and because they knew of the work I had done they asked me to apply for it” (Interview 31, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Founder, Chair and Project Officer)

Indeed, Lawrence (2006) found that a layperson's values can change through their structured volunteering with nature and volunteers may be empowered by their experience and developed biological careers. Finally, environmental interest Volunteer 16, who manages a nature reserve, highlights how she considers environmental volunteering experience as important in order to get a job in such areas even after completing relevant education:

"They finish university, they've got the degree, but they haven't got the background. They haven't used a chainsaw... and they need to get the experience, they need to do that. Without it they'll never get a job without it you know" (Interview 16, 2007: Female, Historical Group Chair)

This is related to Rochester *et al's* (2010) intrinsic volunteer perspective however, volunteer 31 did not intentionally start doing conservation work in order to change his careers so volunteer perspectives are not always so simplistic. So, six of the volunteers also have professional involvement in their areas of interest. Three of these are historical interest volunteers and three are environmental interest volunteers. Half of these professionals are male and half female, with two of the male professionals being historical interest volunteers and two of the female professionals being environmental interest volunteers.

A number of 'amateur' volunteers have also been involved in some semi-professional activities, such as completing academic qualifications and publishing books or leaflets. For example, Volunteer 3 has not developed a full professional involvement with local history but has gone on to publish a book:

"Hence my recent book... it's a bit of an indulgence really, but an enjoyment – for over twenty years. Well on and off, I've done a lot in the meantime" (Interview 3, 2004: Male, Environmental Group Member)

Ellis and Waterton (2004) discuss the different ways in which knowledge is portrayed and the way it may be used and acknowledged, or discarded or suppressed with judgements made about legitimacy is discussed. In relation to the accuracy of the information provided, Volunteer 1 highlights the risks of some of the stories being told about local history being untrue:

“I mean there are a lot of stories going around, some of which you know are rubbish... I mean you know these things; it’s just not true. But then again it’s sorting out the wheat from the chaff” (Interview 1, 2004: Male, Environmental and Historical Group Founder)

This shows that volunteers as well as professionals make assessments of valid and invalid materials. Additionally, in contrast to Lawrence’s (2010) discussion about volunteers’ perceptions when organisations become involved in handling their data, these volunteers have written their own books using their own data, thus keeping control of how their data is handled and presented before making it more widely available. Four case studies now follow to highlight the complexities of individual volunteer’s motivations and experiences.

Case Studies

There now follow four case study examples designed to examine in depth the ways in which two environmental and two historical interest volunteers describe their volunteering experiences. The four case studies have been chosen to highlight areas of similarity and difference as well as to illustrate the ways in which multiple and complex factors influence volunteering. They have also been chosen as they illustrate different areas of volunteering within the study and embody key trends that have become apparent through the wider investigation.

Of these four volunteers concerned, two are male and two female, including one founder member, three volunteers in specific group roles and one 'general' member (i.e. not in holding any particular group positions) group member. Two of the volunteers are from historical interest groups in Leicestershire and two are from environmental interest groups in Derbyshire and Derbyshire/Nottinghamshire. All four are within the 50 plus age group, typical of the volunteers encountered.

Volunteer 2: Eric

Eric is a male, historical interest group founder member and president from Leicestershire. Eric's historical volunteering story began at school. However, as in the case of several historical interest volunteers, he did not initially enjoy history at school:

"Ooh, gosh. Well, erm, at school I was never really interested in history at all, erm, my interest was first of all, well I am a scientist. And history was always something which I found incredibly boring, you know, it was all dates and figures and so. And, we, we had a new history lecturer or teacher or whatever, who later became... Professor of History at Nottingham University... he said who likes history and I think there was one, one person in the class of thirty six or so who said they liked history"

Nevertheless, his initial interest in history did develop at school due to the influence of the new teacher mentioned above:

"So we started off, we all imagined ourselves as various roles in erm, in the manor. When he described and got us to study how, how the manorial system worked, people knew their place or did their work, or whatever it might be... and erm, I was immediately caught by this. I thought this is something I really can identify with. Then he went onto the Agricultural Revolution, which changed all that. And then he went onto the Industrial Revolution. So, erm, having thrown away the way

we'd learnt everything for the last two years, for this new view of history. And I was, I was absolutely riveted by it"

However, the opportunity to develop these interests into voluntary activity did not arise for Eric until well into his working life. Then, eventually, an opportunity arose through involvement in a WEA (Workers Education Authority) course:

"My boss who was the director of the company at the time asked me if I knew where Coalville technical college was... I said yes. Well, it was just around the corner from where I lived. "Why do you want to know?" And he said; "Well there is an interesting course on there I want go to. It's a WEA course and it's about the development of transport in North West Leicestershire". So, well, I mean I'd grown up with the railways and the sidings and everything. It was our playgroup... [Laughs]"

Like several volunteers his involvement with a historical interest group is linked to a college course, which led to the founding of the group and his ongoing involvement thereafter. As all the participants on the course enjoyed it so much, Eric reported that a further course was put on by the WEA. This was then followed by the actual formation of a historical interest group in the late 1960s, described by Eric as "A time when industrial archaeology was in its early days and flourishing":

"There were about 20 of us in the group. And we enjoyed it all so much... We ended up at the end of the course we'd enjoyed it so much he said would he run a follow on course... we chose the agenda, and, erm and our own bits of research. And, erm, it worked so well that we decided erm that we would get together with another group of people... who were doing a similar sort of thing... we met up with them for one occasion... [and] eventually the outcome was that we formed

Bagginsbottom³⁴ Industrial History Society. And I was a founder member of it”

This case of volunteering can be considered ‘serious leisure’, highlighted by Stebbins (1996) as the pursuit of a hobby or specialist (non-work career) with Rochester *et al* (2010) suggesting that serious leisure motivations are generally intrinsic, driven by enthusiasm specific involvement, a way of expressing personality and offering rewards that cannot be found through employment. Eric’s volunteering can also be considered in relation to the Rochester *et al*’s (2010) ‘understanding the world through acquiring knowledge’ psychological need which is suggested may be a motivation behind volunteering.

In fact, Eric’s voluntary group involvement has since developed to include the recording and protection of local industrial heritage in the area, as well as linking into his own family history. Eric, now in his seventies, has been involved with the group ever since its creation and is not only a founder member, but has been nominated by the group as president, something he regards as an ‘honour’. Eric believes the group has made a significant impact in the local area, in recording, protecting and promoting local industrial heritage:

“We’ve actually done an enormous amount of work... on archaeological sites...And, we’ve promoted, various, erm, developments, which we’ve recorded things in all sorts of ways... I helped with it... of the open cast workings at Beaverbrook³⁵ and we found there, this, this, the mine working going back to 1435... Well the shaft there is actually inside now, we salvaged it and it’s erected in Stonesbury³⁶ Discovery Park. And, that fascinated me, because that’s... that happens to be my heritage. It’s because, it’s my... great, great, great, great, great

³⁴ Name changed to protect anonymity.

³⁵ Name changed to protect anonymity.

³⁶ Name changed to protect anonymity.

grandfather that was [Laughs] around in, in the 1600s, and he was actually in charge of this sort of work. Erm, that latched that onto me...”

This development in Eric’s volunteering, thus leads to consideration that his volunteering became more than serious leisure and also relates to Davis Smith’s (2000) ‘philanthropy and service to others’ volunteer motivations and Rochester *et al*’s (2010) ‘educating or training others’ volunteer typology. Additionally, Eric’s activities can be considered as promoting knowledge (Rochester *et al*’s (2010) volunteer typology) and in protecting local heritage, related to mutual aid and self-help (Davis Smith’s (2000) volunteer motivations typology).

Indeed, Eric is also involved in another group,³⁷ with a focus on family history. In this group he communicates with people from abroad via the Internet to help them trace their roots:

“I am in touch with, on the Internet... they want to know where they came from. Now it’s very easy to send them, erm, you know, a digital photograph of where their house might have been or what it looks like today. Erm, but they seem to be more interested in why or what sort of life did their ancestors have, perhaps a couple of hundred years ago, or a hundred years ago, or, fifty years ago, because, erm, because if you are living in Australia and you’ve never been to England it’s incredibly difficult to try to understand... I mean this feller just found it absolutely fascinating... he emails probably about every three weeks”

Eric’s involvement with the family history group has also led him to investigate his own family roots:

“I knew nothing about my family I mean my mother’s side I knew quite a lot about because she was always whittling on about it and that tells you about how my interest in history has changed, doesn’t it! My father

³⁷ Not included in this study.

never ever talked about his family. They're an incredibly interesting family, but he, erm, I mean I have had to find out all that myself, when all the relatives, well more or less all the relatives had gone"

Eric's own personal research into his family roots has even furthered his interest in local industrial developments as his ancestors were actively involved in local industries:

"... My mother's side of the family are from the erm, southern part of the area... Framework knitters... and you see, it's only, it's only when you start to do your research that you understand, you think oh, oh framework, that's interesting. Oh I bet that was ever so nice to do, framework knitting, and you realise that it was absolute hell and it was penury"

This involvement has helped Eric to discover where he has come from and gain an awareness and understanding of his family roots and their involvement and experiences in the local area. Through this process he has also met others with shared interests:

"... You know and I'm, I'm, I now know where I have come from, but I would have had no idea if I hadn't researched it. I just find it absolutely fascinating, and other people do. That's it, that's the thing that's so rewarding about it, you know, when people know you've done a little bit of history they want to know about it and they want to talk to you about it. And they want to know"

Indeed, Eric sees himself as part of a network of volunteers organised through Midlands Industrial Archaeology Groups. So his volunteering is also social, fitting in with Clary *et al's* (1996) 'social' category of motivation. Eric is not just involved in one or two groups, he is involved in three, the third group came about through the development of an event which led on to the formation of another local history group, with which he has remained involved:

“... We got together as a group and we organised a weeklong event, and my part of it was, was, to, apart from join in all the activities with the rest of the group, was to identify the important heritage sites in the village... we created a little village museum in the local school, which was fascinating... we were just an adult group of people and we had to set ourselves up as a company to own the land, so we formed Twizzleton Heritage Trust”³⁸

Eric’s involvement with this second local history group includes further local developments involving connections with the local council. Indeed, this group now runs and offers free public access to a number of sites. Eric sees the free entrance element of these historical sites as being of great importance to the group. It appears that, as a result of the extent of this group’s activities, several specialist sub-groups have formed in order to maintain and run the different sites. Eric is still involved with this group³⁹, which has both environmental and historical interests and has worked with several nationwide environmental organisations:

“And the work we have done on the gorse field now, we have just been given wildlife site status... and, we, the work we are doing on the Skipdale⁴⁰ Spinney, we are working with the Nature Conservation Trust and also with the Forestry Commission to, erm, generate the woodland there”

This thus highlights that Eric has a combination of both historical and environmental interests. Eric is now also chairman of this group and shares his passion for local history with others in order to encourage awareness and enthusiasm:

³⁸ Name changed for anonymity.

³⁹ Also included in this study

⁴⁰ Name changed for anonymity.

“...I do a lot of work trying to do what I got fired up on and that is to erm, actually take people around the area and explain it, try to explain it in the way they understand the way people in those days would have done understand it. So I do a lot of guided walks and I do a lot of talks”

This links into Eric’s passion about understanding what it would have been like to live and work in these places in the past. It also connects to his childhood experiences when his teacher got him interested in and enthusiastic about history. Eric is also now trying to generate interest himself amongst schools and their pupils:

“... And I go round to schools giving slide shows and talks to kids about, well how they would have been if they had lived in the time when the railway came. Erm, and show them how the town has changed, and we put erm, out about eight books I think it is...”

Despite his great enthusiasm for local history Eric was, at first a little hesitant when asked about the importance of history, but he then went on to say:

“I think it is important that, that, erm, I think it is important that the heritage and particular heritage sites are identified for today what are a rather sceptical public, but I think it’s also important for people who are interested and have a genuine interest, erm, are given the maximum help in being able to understand where they came from and what factors helped in their development, where they are at the present day. Gosh that sounds awfully grand doesn’t it”

Therefore Eric’s volunteering is also helping to maintain an understanding of local heritage and place identity linked to the industrial past of the area.

So, Eric’s historical interests began at school, with his historical interest volunteering developing years later with the founding of a new historical

interest group following attendance on a course as an adult. Eric sees his historical interest volunteering as relevant to the recording and protection of local industrial history as well as for investigating his own heritage and roots. In fact, Eric enjoys helping other people investigate their family history and roots, sharing his interests with others, helping to run heritage sites (which have free public access) and using his enthusiasm to encourage others to become interested in local history. Eric is also actively involved in two other groups, both of which have historical interests. In relation to various volunteer typologies, Eric's interests and activities can be considered to have begun as serious leisure interests, but have also involved the acquiring of knowledge, service to others, educating, promoting of knowledge, protecting local heritage and socialising. Therefore, Eric's volunteering cannot be clearly classified as fitting into just one 'type' of volunteering.

Volunteer 5: Emily

Emily is a female historical interest group chairman based in Leicestershire. However she did not have any particular historical interests or experiences when she was younger, or at all prior to her involvement with the local history group. Emily's historical interest story began when she moved to a new area. At that point she decided to get involved in the local activity of historical interest volunteering in order to gain a sense of place and local identity and to find out more about her new home area:

"... I moved to the area from the north east and decided to get involved with some local activity. And the museum, local museum seemed to be the most appropriate one and initially I just thought I would be involved for perhaps sort of one session a fortnight, just being in the museum. Of course I didn't know much about the history of the area. In fact nothing, I spent quite a bit of time in the museum reading up, erm, the information that's there, which taught me something about the area really"

Straightaway, despite having no family connections to the area, Emily found that this involvement helped her develop an identity in a new place; something she identified as important:

“... Because of being sort of a complete stranger to the area, so I didn’t have, as many of our volunteers have, an interest in local history because their family are local families. It was more it terms of a new place you need to find some means of identity in a new place”

So, Emily’s initial motivations were intrinsic. Emily’s sense of developing a new place identity was also driven by her views that the involvement would be useful in trying to fit into a new, and what she thought of as, a ‘tight’, ex-mining community, which had recently undergone many significant changes:

“... It’s expanded enormously and you have a large number of housing estates and a lot of commuters... because the people... for them there is a, a, a very strong sense of local history and involvement and, and, and, the mining community. And there was a big sense of loss too, when the mines closed ‘cos everything changed”

So, Emily became involved in the local historical interest group in the hope that it would help her fit in, in her new rural location. However, it did not take long before Emily found herself more heavily involved in the group than she had initially anticipated:

“... Initially as I said I just intended to be a sort of once a week, once a fortnight volunteer, fitting in the museum, bluffing my way when anyone came in ... I did that for about six or seven months I think. And when it came to the AGM, the chairman and the whole committee resigned, I mean the chairman had given a year’s notice and he’d been chairman for about six years so I mean it wasn’t like, sort of, sort of, you know, like he, it was expected, but the secretary and the treasurer also

resigned and there was a sort of silence and I then thought well, I could sort of tie it over for a bit until someone else comes who knows more about it than I do. So I agreed to be chairman... and I've now been chairman for seven years"

Since then, Emily has found her historical interest volunteering to be quite a commitment, which takes up a significant amount of her time:

"... My involvement has become much more [sighs] that it initially was, in fact, I sort of tried doing two or three half days per week on a fairly regular basis doing different sort of sorts of work admin, exhibition work, which has been, you know, very challenging... going on museum courses, which are run by the county council, the museums forum... I've sort of taken the museum through the registration process, which was quite complicated... which you have to do if you want to go after various funding. So, yes it's been a huge change since, erm, it started"

However, Emily sees the group as being of great importance to the village and local community in which it is based and has found there to be a great deal of local interest in and support for the group. So after initial intrinsic motivations, she can now be considered as being addressing shared needs and being altruistic, carrying on her extensive commitment to the group due to the importance of the group and her volunteering in terms of the local community and village. Emily identifies the importance of the group with helping the local community link the significant industrial changes of the past to the present and the future of the area:

"When we have an exhibition, we have a lot of support, a lot of interest. Erm, I think it is a sense of identity in a sense of continuation and it also can help when a community sort of, sort of... suffered from a period of depression, as this one has, to... keep sort of a record of... of its past. And also to sort of, to look to things, that are happening in the future and record those as well. So I think sort of, it's a sense of continuity and

perhaps sort of researching the, the past, and, and acknowledging the past and not forgetting, sort of like, the history of the mining community and, and other, the clay industry too, which is still functioning. But is all very important and I think can have sort of a psychologically... important effect”

So Emily can be considered involved in ‘data collection’ and ‘community activity’ volunteering types from Rochester *et al*’s (2010) volunteer typology. In addition, Emily’s historical interest group volunteering has had the desired effect personally that she was looking for as it has helped her to become accepted into the local community:

“Oh yes, yes, it has helped me to fit in as someone who has moved into the area from the outside and as I have sort of half infiltrated [laughs] the sort of, the local... community. So it would have been difficult to do if I hadn’t got involved with anything because there would have been no real point of contact”

So the volunteering has also met with Emily’s personal needs. Now, following on from the success of the museum, Emily is looking for new premises to allow the group to expand, as well as investigating opportunities for local schools to be more involved:

“[Laughs] Well I would like to see the museum continue on and expand, which is a problem because of the size of it and we are, have been looking for new premises. I just, erm, I’d like to think that, just, specially the archival work, which is quite an unique archive because of our location, is, is continues because it’s important, I think, and appreciated. Schools for example, are involved with the museum and, erm, that’s sort of one of the most rewarding areas because the school children are really fascinated by it all. I’d like to see it continue, yes”

Therefore, as with Eric, Emily is also involved with activities which fit into Rochester *et al's* (2010) 'education' and 'promotion of knowledge' typologies.

So Emily's historical interests and volunteering began when she moved to an ex-mining village in the countryside and wanted to find a way of being accepted into the local community, to develop her own sense of identity in a new place and to learn a little about the area she had moved to. However, she soon found herself in a key role for the group and spending a significant amount of time volunteering. Despite this, Emily feels that both her, and the local community, have benefited greatly from the group and she is keen to see the group continue and expand. In relation to volunteer typologies, Emily's interests started off as intrinsic but soon her levels of commitment were driven by altruistic and shared needs motivations with her activities can be said to include community activity, data collection, education and promotion of knowledge. Again this highlights the complexities both of volunteer motivations and the classification of volunteer activities.

Volunteer 17: Fred

Fred is a male environmental interest group photographic librarian, involved in volunteering in Derbyshire and beyond. Fred's environmental interest story begins when he was a child living in the local area and his grandfather would take him out in the local countryside:

"Ever since I was a young boy, my grandfather used to be a gamekeeper and I used to go walking across fields with him and so on. So it started when I was a very young age..."

However, Fred's voluntary involvement, as in the case of Eric, did not begin until he was a working adult, although it started at the beginning of his working life, rather than later on as in the case of Eric. Indeed

Fred's volunteering began through a contact at work, and this contact introduced Fred to an environmental interest group that he was already involved with:

"When I actually first started to work at the age of eighteen I met somebody who was a member of the group... it was through him that I joined"

This can be considered an opportunity which arose through a contact rather than a particular motivation, but linking back to his childhood interests his volunteering may be considered non-work, hobby interests in relation to Stebbin's (1996) 'serious leisure' typology. Then, with some similarity to Emily, although over a longer period of time, Fred progressed from an ordinary volunteer to a committee member for the group:

"When I first started going I was just an ordinary member, and then at some point I joined the committee and helped to organise the various meetings and events and so on"

However, following on from this, Fred's commitment and involvement with the group had to reduce as a result of his career developments:

"And since then I went into a job that was much more pressurised and I just didn't have time to do it so I am still a member of the group but I'm less active than I was now"

Despite this, Fred is still an active member of the group, even if not so active as previously. Fred also highlights that he has gained a variety of, physical and mental benefits through his involvement:

"... Just a sense of enjoyment, of relaxation, erm and just knowing that each time you go out things will be different, you will see something you've not seen before or see it in a different light, or whatever... I feel

very relaxed, quite excited, depending on what I've seen really, it's a mixture of feelings... I feel that mentally I feel relaxed, erm, and I feel that I have actually spent my time usefully, even though it's only for myself it's different to just sitting in the house and watching the telly or reading a book. It's physically going out and seeing something, it's getting into the fresh air. So I suppose physically I feel and mentally I feel more relaxed and cheerful and physically the same sort of thing I suppose"

So Fred has gained a range of intrinsic benefits as well as having the chance to develop his non-work interests through volunteering with the group, linking in with Ellis Paine *et al's* (2007) suggestion that those involved in informal volunteering are happier and more satisfied with their lives. Fred has also benefitted from his involvement in the group in other ways. For example, Fred also highlights that due to his volunteering and meeting other volunteers, his environmental interests have become broader:

"Sharing information with other members has been particularly useful, especially in insects and so on because, when I first started, I was more interested in birds, but that then developed into insects from close up photography and that was through talking to other people and so on"

Like Eric, Fred is also involved in more than one group with environmental interests. Indeed, Fred has the role of photographic librarian in two environmental interest groups. He is also an ordinary member of three additional environmental groups⁴¹. He has been involved with all of these groups at "different times" for "at least 10 years".

⁴¹ Three of which are directly included in this study and the fourth a national group which is represented through a local group in this study

So Fred's volunteering has led to the development of his 'understanding of the world', which is one of the basic volunteer psychological needs highlighted by Rochester *et al* (2010).

In summary, Fred's environmental interests began as a child and developed into volunteering at the age of eighteen when he met someone involved in an environmental interest, voluntary group at work. Over time, Fred's involvement increased and he became a committee member. However when he took on a more pressurised job, this level of involvement could not be sustained and he had to cut down on his voluntary activities. Despite this, Fred is still an active volunteer with the group and enjoys the physical and mental benefits of getting outside with the group looking at wildlife. In addition, through meeting other enthusiasts at the group his interests have developed into wildlife photography. In fact, he is now a photographic librarian for two environmental interest groups, and a member of three others.

Fred's interests can be considered serious leisure, bringing with them intrinsic benefits including greater mental and physical satisfaction and opportunities to develop greater understanding of the natural world. Therefore although Fred's volunteering can be considered in relation to different volunteer typologies his volunteering experiences and motivations are perhaps less complex than those of Eric and Alice.

Volunteer 30: Alice

Alice is a female environmental interest group member for a group based in Derbyshire. Alice's environmental interest story begins in her childhood days:

"Ooh, I think it was really going out with my dad you know and him showing me things. We'd sort of go out into the local sort of, you know where we lived was on the edge of the local countryside so we could go

out for walks and look out for birds and trees and stuff and just doing it that way really”

During the development of Alice’s environmental interests, she has also been involved with large organisations, such as Friends of the Earth, as well as with local planning issues. So Alice’s interests can be considered in relation to Rochester *et al*’s (2010) environmental campaigning volunteer type. Alice has also been a regular bird-watcher for many years and involved in various local and county-wide environmental interest groups, linking to Stebbin’s (1996) ideas of serious leisure volunteering. She did not point to anything in particular that prompted her involvement with her main environmental interest group. However, after being a regular member for some years she finally gave into requests for extra help with the group:

“I’ve been active since 2004 and a member prior to that. They kept asking for people to help with their conservation work, they kept asking and kept asking so finally I said yeah I’ll help”

This suggests that she was persuaded to becoming involved rather than driven by her own motivations. However, Alice also spoke of two other groups that she is currently involved with, although not in such an active way:

“I’ve been involved with Winsworth and Twiddlethorpe groups. The Twiddlethorpe group has only been set up in the past few years... The Sward group I’m a member but not particularly active” ⁴²

Alice talks of her volunteering as something that gets her out in the fresh air, however, participating in voluntary activity which includes data gathering has also made her feel valued and that her leisure activities have a purpose:

⁴² The names of the groups have been changed to protect anonymity

“You’ve got a reason for going out and doing something so it keeps you active... It’s definitely good to get out in the fresh air... the other part which is satisfying is feeling that you, if you are recording, whether it is birds or other species, getting that data and your records, knowing it’s useful I think that has positive benefits on your health, knowing what you are doing is valued and its value, not just for idle leisure”

Alice highlights that she gains a personal life satisfaction from her volunteering, a benefit of volunteering suggested by Ellis Paine *et al* (2007) and a satisfaction from being contributing to data collection, a type of volunteering identified by Rochester *et al* (2010). Alice also enjoys the chance to see different things out in the countryside and the opportunity to meet and socialise with others who have similar interests:

“It makes you feel good really to get out, you know, if you see new or exciting things, things you haven’t seen for a while it gives you a little buzz... and the social side of those kind of groups is quite important really and because you are doing stuff with likeminded people”

Therefore it can be said that Alice is also motivated by the social rewards of her volunteering, a motivation categorised by Clary *et al* (1996). Having these environmental interests also links in with Alice’s family time, and it is important for Alice that she and her family are aware of the environment and have empathy for the natural environment:

“For me, and my family, it is about getting out and relaxing and you know realising that there are other things out there that are important, getting away from the daily grind... its complex... the way you are brought up to empathises with nature...”

Alice has found that now most of her friends are people with similar environmental interests, as well as several family members:

“My brother works in that kind of sector, my parents have got an interest. The children are both interested, they don’t work in that area but they are both interested... most of my friends are people with those interests”

Alice is now more likely to go out on bird-spotting trips with friends than with the volunteer group. However, Alice has recently gone from being an environmental amateur to an environmental professional as she now has a job working for one of the national environmental organisations that she previously volunteered for. This means both her leisure and professional activities are now focused around her environmental interests:

“I mean I am now sort of working and doing that sort of ecological stuff so it’s, obviously the basic interest is still there, but there is more knowledge associated with it now I suppose it’s more sort of technical stuff that I am dealing with, so it’s not just a kind of hobby... there is the stuff I do for the... society is in my spare time and I’ve got work stuff as well which is related so all of my life is that sort of environmental-ecological kind of stuff”

However, there are some variations between Alice’s environmental volunteering activities and her work. As well as involving more knowledge and technical expertise, Alice’s job is more focused on planning and survey creation than her voluntary data recording:

“My [job] involvement has been much more on the conservation side and helping them, planning things, helping them designing survey forms, and I’ve not been doing it for very long really”

So, in the case of Alice, she is an environmental interest group volunteer in Derbyshire, who was brought up near the countryside and encouraged to go out and look at nature. Following on from, this she

has been involved in a range of environmental interest groups, including those focused on campaigning. She does not have a particular role with the main environmental interest group she currently volunteers for, but she is an active member. She is also involved to a lesser extent in two other environmental interest groups. One of the main voluntary activities is recording biological data, the value of which provides an additional motivation and benefit from her volunteering. She also enjoys the general wildlife observations and social aspects that make up a part of her voluntary involvement. Alice's environmental interests are something she shares with friends and a number of family members. Additionally, she has recently become an environmental professional, merging her hobby and work interests.

In relation to volunteer typologies discussed in the literature, Alice has been involved in campaigning, hobby interest (serious leisure) and data collection, and her volunteering gives her personal satisfaction and provides her with social opportunities with fellow enthusiasts, family and friends. She has also now involved professionally, but she carries out different activities in her professional role.

Conclusion

The key findings of this chapter are that early experiences and specific events influenced the participants in this study to become volunteers. Indeed, more than a third of the volunteers recalled early positive and memorable experiences which had influenced their volunteering and over a third of volunteers recalled specific events which instigated their volunteering. In particular, the personal experience of encountering nature and experiencing places of environmental interest played an important role in encouraging environmental volunteering, while historical interest volunteers highlighted the importance of local connections and interests. For the volunteers in this study, volunteering is about personal experiences, belonging to and integrating into place-based communities and social groups, and contributing to, or improving

places, communities and environments. Government initiatives, such as The National Forest were not mentioned as specific motivators for volunteering by participants in this study.

Environmental and rural experiences, mentioned by the volunteers involved time spent with family and friends for approximately a quarter of participants in this study. Indeed, Rochester *et al* (2010) highlight that living in a rural areas encourages volunteering. However, in this study it appears that not only the experience of belonging to a rural community has influenced individuals to become volunteers but also the experience of visiting and taking part in activities in the countryside even when they did not necessarily live there. This may be as experiences of 'natural places' are often associated with feelings of wellbeing and happiness (Simmons, 1993). Additionally, experiences of belonging to a family or a group of friends whilst taking part in countryside and environmental activities appears to have been particularly influential. This may be due to, as Gooch (2003a) highlights, the significance of family connections in developing environmental interests and relationships with place.

On the other hand, the development of historical interests by volunteers were more focused on specific family stories and local places, such as living in a specific village and other personally meaningful places. When experiences of history at school did not include local or identifiable elements, this had generally discouraged historical interest. However, despite this these individuals had later become historical interest volunteers. The importance of local connections rather than the more general history covered at school was highlighted by a quarter of the historical interest volunteers. This suggests the volunteers have a sense of belonging to their family or local area but are disconnected from history which seems unconnected to their everyday life. Indeed, Tamisoglou (2010) argues that the history of everyday life would also make history more interesting for school pupils, a sentiment that is reflected in the comments of volunteers. Interests in local history and family history can be linked to motivations about discovering and

understanding personal roots (Nash, 2002) and local distinctiveness (Selman, 1996). Therefore it can be said that local history interests can also be about discovering a sense of belonging to a particular community, family or area.

Personal connections, experiences, belonging and place are significant in motivating environmental and historical interest volunteering, which can develop due to both lifelong interests and particular events, especially those events that have resulted in the volunteers having more time available to participate in volunteering. This highlights the complexity of volunteer motivations. In the case of environmental volunteers, the interests of those with significant early experiences had generally expanded and developed over time. Notable events and changes in lifestyle were important in mobilising environmental and historical interest volunteering, and included moving, retiring and becoming unemployed. Retiring gave a number of volunteers in this study more time to become involved in something new as did unemployment which also motivated some volunteers to seek out opportunities to gain new skills without a financial cost. Rochester *et al* (2010) highlight this as an example of the personal benefits of volunteering.

However motivations are complex and may involve both helping others and gaining personal benefits, as highlighted by Carlo *et al* (2005). Motivations change and develop, sometimes starting out as intrinsic but then becoming about shared needs or altruistic concerns. There is considerable evidence of volunteer activities developing and changing over time, with a small number of volunteers experiencing a merging of amateur and professional involvement. The volunteers often gained personal benefits from their activities and involvement as well as feeling like they were contributing to the wider community or wider issues. This both supports both Rochester *et al*'s (2010) suggestion that people are motivated to act in order to address a need as well as Hustinx and

Lammertyn's (2003) theory that volunteering needs to complement volunteers personal interests in order to keep them involved.

In terms of contributing to local places and communities and aligning with personal interests, the environmental volunteers focused more on the value of general experiences of getting out and about outside and contributing to the preservation of species and habitats. This is an example of natural resource activities, which can be considered, as suggested by Gooch (2003a) to be deepening understanding of place. In contrast the historical interest volunteers emphasised the importance of the preservation and sharing of the history and knowledge of local places. For historical interest volunteers it can perhaps be suggested, as discussed by Kearns (1995), that active citizenship is providing them with an opportunity to consider place-uniqueness. So in the case of environmental volunteers, their understandings of place are more focused on the natural environment, habitats and species, while historical interest volunteers are more focused on place in relation to people.

The case studies in this chapter highlight how key aspects of the volunteering experience can be considered through specific individual examples. Eric is motivated by his own connections to the local area as well as helping others investigate their local historic connections and protecting knowledge of historically important local industries. Therefore Eric has personal motivations as well as motivations to help others. He is interested in both his own historical roots and well as preservation of the industrial history of the area as ways of developing his own understanding of place and a sense of how he belongs there. For Eric personal roots are partially built through genealogy, which Nash (2002) suggests is as a way of rethinking the self. It can perhaps, therefore be said that Eric enjoys history he can identify with, a history of family connections and local places – a history he belongs to. Eric also investigates these roots as part of local culture and heritage, which King and Clifford (1985) highlight can be of psychological importance. Eric

considers it an 'honour' to belong to a group investigating, recording and providing information about the history of local industry and culture. Thus it can be suggested that Eric's sense of belonging is about family, local culture and place belonging.

In contrast Emily did not have historical connections to the local area or mining elsewhere. She became involved in historical volunteering in order to gain a sense of belonging amongst the people in the local community and to gain a better knowledge and understanding of the mining history of the local area. Emily's involvement is driven by coming into the area as an outsider and wanting to develop a sense of belonging to and understanding of the local community in terms of communities of practice and of place – two overlapping types of community involvement. Rather than her volunteering being facilitated by a sense of belonging, as in the case of the volunteers in Gooch's (2003) study, her sense of belonging can be considered in relation to Delanty (2010) who suggests 'outsider' attempts of belonging and relationships with 'insiders' are important in shaping community. Although Emily has no family connections to the area she now feels she has developed a place within, and belonging to, the local community, which she considers to be a 'tight' community of insiders with family connections to the local mining industry. She also believes that the work of the voluntary groups, of which she has been the chair for many years, has helped the local community adjust to the changes in industry and culture. In this way her belonging to the community has helped to shape the community and place.

Fred's environmental interests have developed over a long time and he enjoys the benefits of belonging to a 'shared interest' community as well as getting out and about outside. This relationship between environmental volunteer and being outside can perhaps be considered more in terms of relationships with outdoor space rather than a sense belonging to particular places (see Lawrence, 2006). Fred's sense of belonging is not so strongly developed around linkages to the specific

places where he volunteers but is more about belonging to a shared interest community, which can be said to exist without belonging to a particular place. Fred's environmental knowledge and interests have evolved over time through his involvement, which can be considered similar to volunteers in Gooch's (2003) study where volunteers increased their understanding of landscape and living within sustainable limits over time. Such knowledge and understanding can perhaps be said to also create connections with, and senses of belonging to, wider communities of environmentalists and those involved with environmental volunteering. Although Fred's level of involvement has changed over time due to other life commitments he has continued to enjoy sharing experiences and knowledge with others in the environment volunteer community.

In the final case study, Alice's environmental interests have expanded and developed over time. She feels she has benefitted from the social sense of belonging to volunteer groups as well as from developing a professional role from her voluntary interests. She is currently involved in biological data collection which is contributing to wider records. This is similar to Lawrence's (2006) findings, which suggest structured environmental volunteering can result in development of related biological careers. Thus, Alice's belonging to an environmental volunteer group has developed into her belonging to a community of environmental professionals. As well as feeling like she belongs to a group of like-minded people or 'social interest' community like Fred (rather than to a particular place or place-based community), it is important for Alice that the work she is carrying out has purpose and there is a wider benefit to the environment in general. This relationship with the environment can also be considered a sense of belonging to a non-human community.

These examples show how different individuals' experiences and activities can be considered in relation to various different literatures and theories on motivation and volunteering, while certain themes of

belonging to different places and communities clearly emerge across the study. This and the previous empirical chapter have investigated the composition and activities of environmental and historical interest groups in The National Forest and the motivations and experiences of their volunteers. The third empirical chapter now considers relationships with place, through active involvement with, and feelings of belonging to, particular places in The National Forest, including specific connections the volunteers and their groups have with The National Forest as a specially designated site.

Chapter 6: Relationships with Places: involvement and belonging

“For thousands of years Britons enjoyed a deep connection with the forests... Today, The National Forest is proving a powerful means by which people can reconnect with the landscape and, indeed each other” (Parry, 2006: 159)

Introduction

The environmental and historical volunteers and interest groups in this study can be considered based in and/or involved with local places however, interestingly The National Forest place designation is signposted as being a place for the nation, a ‘national’ place. Additionally, one of the key aims of The National Forest initiative is to “bestow a new cohesive and coherent identity on communities with widely different histories and experiences” (Bell and Evans, 1997: 262). The National Forest project was designed to be, and is seen as, an opportunity for regenerating including transforming derelict post-industrial landscapes and creating a mosaic of habitats, including through tree planting (Parry, 2006). Indeed, Parry (2006: 156) suggests that for local residents The National Forest is about improving the local environments and “an opportunity to move from a situation of loss... to one of gain”, and Delanty (2010: 9) suggests community can also be about the ‘recovery of what has been lost’. The National Forest can be considered an edgeland (as described by Shoard, 2002) area with a range of industrial history including coal mining as well as rural areas and towns, and as highlighted by Crang (1998) UK coal fields are made up of stark contrasts combining industrial and rural communities with strong community cultures. Therefore both before and since the designation of The National Forest this area has undergone significant historical and landscape changes, which can be considered in relation to the activities and interests of the local environmental and historical interest groups in the area.

In this chapter the relationships between both the volunteers and voluntary groups, and the local places they both choose to meet in and are actively involved in are first considered. Next relationships with the 'national' local place, The National Forest, are discussed. Cresswell (2004: 10) suggests that space becomes place when humans attach meaning to it and become attached to it in some way, for example through naming it, and includes within his interpretation of sense of place the emotional attachment people have for a place. Cresswell (2004: 21) also refers to the work of Relph (1976) highlighting how we may take part in different types of activities in different places, may express nostalgia for places where we have been in the past, and may protect "our place against 'those who do not belong'". Indeed, volunteers may engage with places at a variety of levels. This chapter also considers how environmental and historical interest volunteers and their groups are attached to places, including the nostalgia they may express and their desire to protect these places. Indeed, Cresswell (2004) highlights how places can be unique both in terms of their physical features, social groups, production of meaning and links to the past and other places.

Additionally, in this chapter group and volunteer relationships with place both in terms of the social and the non-human are discussed. As discussed by Massey (2005) relationships and construction of the social can be negotiated through space and places. Delanty (2010) also highlights how communities are shaped both by relations between insiders and outsiders and attempts at belonging. Indeed, as discussed by Gooch (2003), active volunteering is often facilitated by a sense of belonging linked to place. This chapter will now consider any meanings or attachment environmental and historical interest groups and their volunteers have for the places they are involved in and to what extent their involvement is linked to any sense of belonging to a particular place. Engagement and belonging can be considered in relation to a variety of types of place – specific sites and the wider environment. For example types of places considered may include rural areas, villages,

towns, parks, mining areas and The National Forest. Finally the chapter concludes with four case study examples of groups active in different types of place within the National Forest.

Environmental and Historical Interest Group Places

Cresswell (2004) highlights how space, landscape and place are interrelated and how place can be a way of understanding the world through both the past and links to other places. This first section takes a more descriptive approach to place with some consideration of the social activities which take place in particular places. It provides an overview of the types of places environmental and historical interest groups in The National Forest are involved with and considers examples of the range of places the groups meet at, are based at and involved with.

The environmental and historical interest groups in this study are associated with a range of different places in The National Forest. Fourteen of the groups (24%) referred to having responsibility for, or for helping with, the restoration, management or running of particular places, such as buildings, woods or parks, for example the Friends of Eureka Park, Measham Museum, Claymills Pumping Engine Trust and the Swannington Heritage Trust. Other groups regularly meet at specific locations but their group's activities are not directly linked with the place they meet in, for example church and village halls host a range of groups, including environmental and historical interest groups, whose focus is not specifically on these sites.

Some groups take part in activities across a wider range of places both inside and outside of The National Forest, including focusing on county-wide activities. For example, the main aim of the Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society (DANES) is 'to promote the study and recording of moths, butterflies, insects and all land arthropods within the two counties' and the group gather recordings on

insects and arrange field meetings across the two counties (Derbyshire and Nottinghamshire Entomological Society, 2010). Others have a more social, human focus. For example, the South Derbyshire Family History Group meet in the Conference Room at Sharpe's Pottery Museum, although they are not directly responsible for the venue they meet at in any way, and their activities focus on researching families that have lived in South Derbyshire rather than focusing on, or having associations with a specific place or places within South Derbyshire. Twenty four of the groups are focused in or around particular settlements, for example towns or villages, although investigations revealed that sometimes these groups take part in activities outside of the village or town in which they are based. Twenty one groups are county based or focus on part of a county or counties, for example, Leicestershire and South Derbyshire. Eleven groups are based in, around or focus on particular features, such as museums, woods or a canal. Finally three of the groups are based on other non-county areas, notably Charnwood, The National Forest and the East Midlands.

Meeting Places

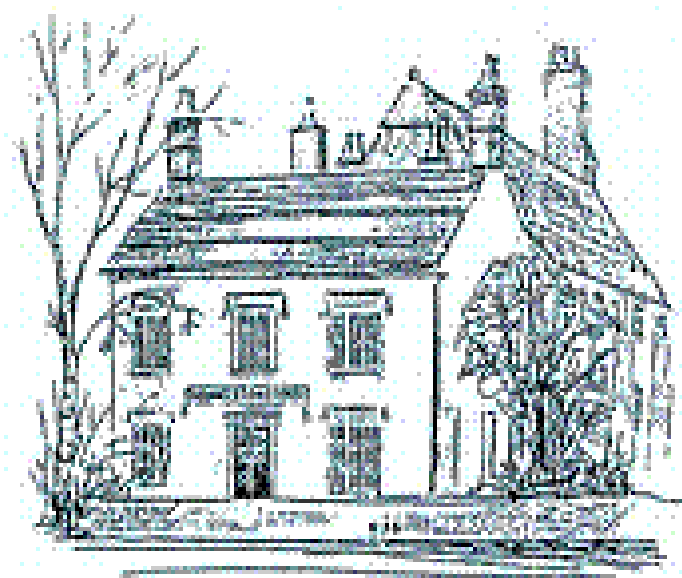
The meeting places of the environmental and historical interest groups are now considered in more detail. Volunteers representing 12 of the historical interest groups and one group with both historical and environmental interest said that their groups met regularly at a specific location. These places include museums, village halls, schools, community centres, churches, pubs and homes. For example, the Friends of Rosliston Wood and Burton Conservation Volunteers both hold their meetings in pubs – The Albert, Burton on Trent and The Bulls Head, Rosliston.

Community centres and village halls are popular places for groups to meet, with volunteers from five groups stating that they met at these venues. For example, The Bagworth Forward Group (with both historical and environmental interests) meets at its local community

centre, Bagworth Community Centre, the Ticknall Preservation and History Group meets at Ticknall Village Hall, and Leicestershire Industrial History Group meets at St. Mary's Community Hall, St. Mary's Avenue, Braunstone. The Donisthorpe District and Local History Group also meets at its local village hall after the church hall it previously met at closed (Interview, 2008). Thringstone Archaeology and History Group meets at Thringstone House (see Figure 6.1), another community centre, and sometimes holds exhibitions there to display photographs and documents (Interview, 2004). One of the reasons the group meets at Thringstone House is to have contact with the other groups that meet there:

“We we’re based there because it is central and we are linking with other groups within the centre and that’s where you meet other people who are organising other things for the village, you know and you can all get together, yeh” (Interview, 2004)

Figure 6.1: Thringstone House



(Source: Friends of Thringstone,⁴³ 2009)

⁴³ The Friends of Thringstone Group was founded after group research for this thesis began. The group was founded in 2005 and its aim is to improve the environment and preserve and promote the history of Thringstone.

Thringstone House has been a centre for social activities in Thringstone village since it was bought by the Booth Family in 1901 'for the benefit of the people of Thringstone and surrounding communities', and the building is now known as Thringstone Community Centre (Friends of Thringstone, 2009). Charles Booth was born in Liverpool on 30th March 1840 and became a well-known figure in Victorian Britain due to his concern for contemporary social problems. He died in 1916 at his country home of Gracedieu in Thringstone, Leicestershire and is buried in Thringstone churchyard (London School of Economics and Political Science, 2002). Other activities held at Thringstone House include: yoga, art and literature lectures, a film club, education classes, exercise classes (Thringston Community Centre 2012) and the Friends of Thringstone with whom the Thringstone Archaeology and History Group has been involved in recent years (Friends of Thringstone, 2012).

Another example is churches with two environmental interest groups - the RSPB Burton and South Derbyshire Local Group and the Burton and District Branch of the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust - holding their indoor meetings at All Saints Church Hall in Burton-upon-Trent (See Figure 6.2). All Saints is a Church of England church and was built over 100 years ago in the Victorian style (Archbishops' Council, 2010).

Figure 6.2: All Saints Church (Hall on right side of photo - The 'hall' is part of the church, located by going through the main church entrance and turning left straight afterwards)



(Source: Towns, 2008)

Other groups that meet at All Saints Church in Burton on Trent include: a Netmums parent and toddler group and a Burton Alcoholics Anonymous local group, as well as a Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Burton and District Local Group. The Burton Conservation Volunteers group also included the talks organised by the Staffordshire Wildlife Trust Burton and District Local Group at All Saints Church in their calendar of scheduled activities.

Another example of a shared meeting place is schools. The Willington History Group meets at Willington Old School (see Figure 6.3).

Figure 6.3: Willington Old School



(Source: Myott, 2006)

Willington Old School is dated 1894, although the primary school has since relocated and the Old School now houses Willington Pre-School. It provides space for several adult education classes. It is also the meeting place for Willington History Group and the far end of the building is a private residence (Myott, 2006).

In contrast, the Charley Heritage Group meets at members' houses within the parish of Charley, the place where they are active. This provides a convenient and social option for the small group without incurring any additional costs and the meeting places do not have to be shared with any other groups. However, meeting at a volunteer's home can also be argued to make a group more exclusive or less open to new members than other groups which hold more open meetings at public buildings. For example, Repton Village History Group previously met in volunteers' houses and potential volunteers were 'grilled' before it was decided by the group if they could get involved (Interview 9, 2005). However this has now changed and the group now have open

meetings once a month at the local village hall (see Figure 6.4) and have made its archives more accessible to others.

Figure 6.4: Repton Village Hall



(Source: Burton Mail 2011)

Not Just a Meeting Place

Another example of group meeting places, are those that are not only meeting venues but places where groups are more significantly involved. For example, the Magic Attic, a grass roots historical interest group which provides a significant local community resource, works from and stores its Burton Mail newspaper archives at the Sharpe's Pottery buildings. Sharpe's Pottery Museum (see Figures 6.5, 6.6, and 6.7) is centred round a bottle kiln and includes displays of artefacts, models, film clips and interactive computer activities on the cultural heritage of the area. While this site has obvious connections to the industrial history of the area covered by the newspaper archive, it also has wider linkages with local people and places. For example, the Sharpe's Pottery building also houses Swadlincote's Tourist Information

Centre (and shop⁴⁴), People Express (a community arts group), a conference room (holding up to 50 people, with catering facilities) which can be hired by the public and a café. The Sharpe's Pottery is also now known as a civic amenity, with the kiln being used for concerts due to its wonderful acoustics.

Figure 6.5: Sharpe's Pottery (Main Entrance)



(Source: Towns, 2008)

⁴⁴ Selling traditional pottery, traditional children's games, locally made jewellery and other gift items

Figure 6.6: Sharpe's Pottery (Side View)



(Source: Towns, 2008)

Figure 6.7: Sharpe's Pottery (Main Entrance after recent renovations completed in 2011)



(Source: Towns, 2011)

The Sharpe's Pottery buildings themselves are of historical interest. The Sharpe's Pottery kilns were built by Solomon Whitaker who was one of the businessmen who made up the consortium that bought Sharpe's Pottery in 1924. His family later became sole owners and his grandson

was still the freeholder in 2005 (SDDC and Sharpe's Pottery, 2005). After the pottery closed in 1967, the buildings ended up as Grade II listed and on the English Heritage 'at risk' register. A Heritage Lottery Grant and local funding enabled Sharpe's Pottery Museum to open on 18 January 2003. The Sharpe's Pottery Heritage and Arts Trust Ltd have a 125 year lease on the site. The project partners that formed this Trust are: the Magic Attic, People Express, the South Derbyshire Local History Forum (now closed), South Derbyshire District Council and the South Derbyshire Writers' Group (which was involved in the formation of the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group – Interview, 2008). The Sharpe's Pottery Heritage and Arts Trust Ltd formed a 'Friends of' Group. The South Derbyshire Family History Society also meets at Sharpe's Pottery Museum. So there are a number of voluntary and community groups involved with the building as well as The Magic Attic historical interest group. Additionally, rather than just holding meetings in this place, along with a number of groups and events, the Magic Attic have a permanent place and community resource within this building, which also complements their interests.

As with The Magic Attic (archives), the Friends of Ashby Museum and the Measham Museum group, are both based at the museums which they have some responsibility for, where their permanent collections of artefacts are based and which complement their interests. When I visited Measham Museum in 2004 to interview one of their volunteers, space was an issue, something which both the museums in this study referred to:

"Conservation of documents, photographs, it all has to be done on a small scale because of, again the space is hugely limited... some of the exhibition work, it has to be rotated, you know, because we are very short of space. And then there is the education side, we have education packs, which we have prepared, which the schools borrow - we do have the schools, local schools through the museum. We can only get 10 children in at a time." (Interview, 2004)

However, since my visit, Measham Museum has moved (in 2008) from 56 High Street, Measham (where it had been located since 1992) and re-opened in 2009 at Measham Station (see Figure 6.8). Measham Museum now takes up one third of the old Station building, whilst the rest of the space is used by local businesses (Measham Museum and History Group, 2011). So as with The Magic Attic group Measham Museum is now based in a shared building, which provides a hub for the groups meetings and activities. In 2008, the Measham Museum Group received a £10,000 'Award for All Lottery Grant' in order to purchase new display cabinets and refurbish facilities in the museum, making the group's archive collection more accessible to the wider public and improving disabled access to the collection. Also in a similar case to the Sharpe's Pottery building, on 9th April 2009 Measham Station was handed over to the group after being renovated to the original design and repainted in Midland Railway colours, a process funded by the East Midlands Development Agency (£322,500), Waste Recycling Environmental (WREN) Ltd (£40,000), Measham Development Trust (£15,000), the National Forest Company (£4,000), and Leicestershire County Council (£200,000) (Information on Leicestershire, 2009).⁴⁵ Originally part of the Midland Railways line from Coventry to Moira, Measham Station closed in the 1960s and was later acquired by Leicestershire County Council, resulting in the development of the Ashby Woulds Heritage Trail. It is also hoped that the Ashby Canal will be restored alongside the station building (Information on Leicestershire, 2009).

⁴⁵ Clay materials have been donated by Hanson/Red Bank Manufacturing Co Ltd. The building work was supervised by Leicestershire County Council and carried out by Bonser Building Contractors.

Figure 6.8: Measham Museum



(Source: Measham Museum and History Group website, 2011)

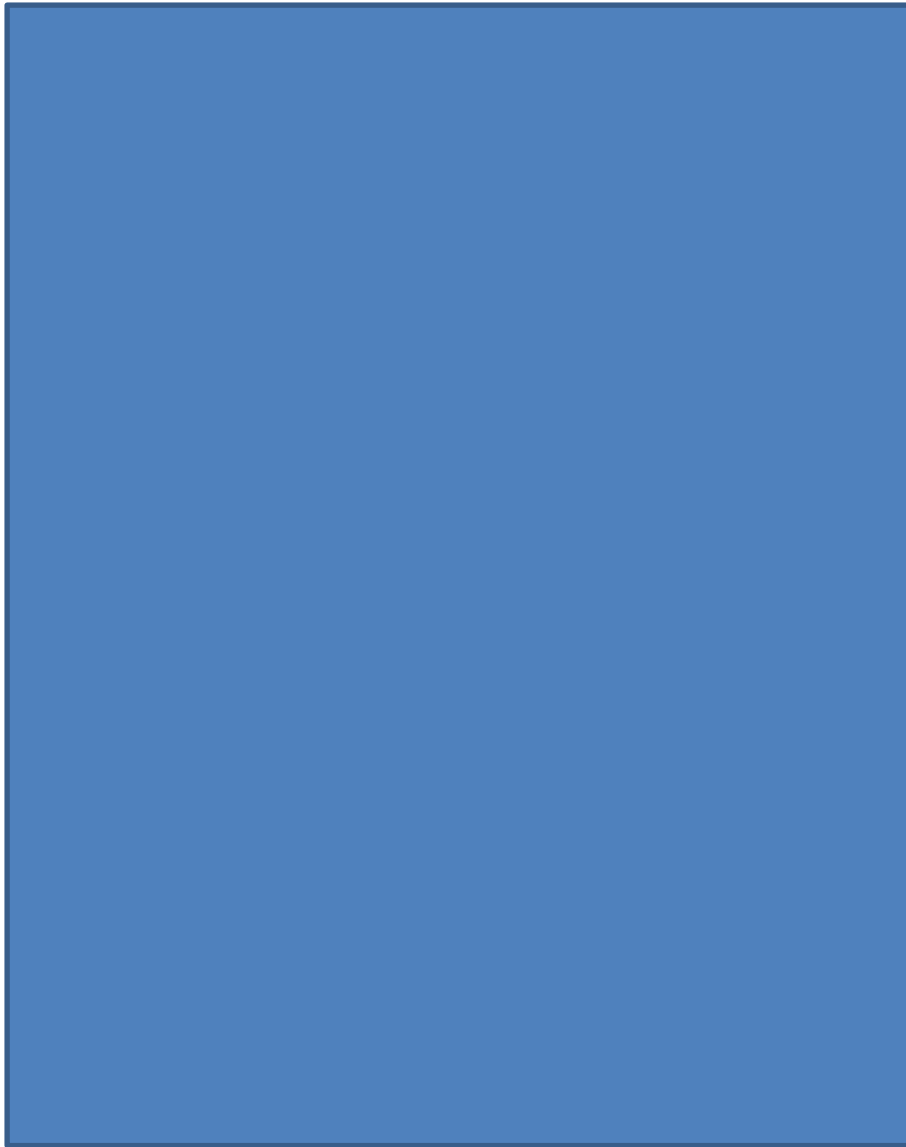
Ashby Museum made a similar though earlier change in premises moving in 1991. When Ashby Museum was established in 1982, it began in a small cottage in Lower Church Street, Ashby de la Zouch. However by 1991 it had relocated to the old National School Building in North Street (extended in 2006-7), which is a shared location with the Library and Tourist Information Centre (Ashby Museum, 2011). So Ashby Museum is also based in shared premises in similar circumstances to both Measham Museum and Sharpe's Pottery/the Magic Attic.

The South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group meets at Gresley Old Hall, and although the premises are not called a museum, this group hosts/runs a permanent museum at Gresley Old Hall. Gresley Old Hall is a large house and grade II listed building with red brick with stone dressings and tiled roof (English Heritage, 1981). Sir Nigel Gresley opened a small mine linked to a pottery in the grounds of his ancestral

home, Gresley Hall, in 1795 and eventually Gresley Old Hall became the main social club for miners and their families. It now houses a collection of tools, books, photographs and multi-media showing mining heritage (Leicestershire Promotions, 2011). So Gresley Old Hall, the place in which the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group meets and has its museum, is also culturally significant to the activities of the group and the artefacts in the museum. As with the other two museum groups the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group also sets up exhibitions at other locations and as part of other local community events.

Additionally there is the Claymills Pumping Engines Trust (see case study), which meets at the Claymills Pumping Engine site, which the group is also responsible for and forms the basis of the group's purpose. However, all of the Claymills Pumping Engines Trust meetings and activities take place at this site, with the main public events run by the group being its open steaming days. All of the above groups meet at places where they all have significant involvement or resources. The Swannington Heritage Trust is also involved with a place which forms the basis for the groups' purpose. The main activity of the Swannington Heritage Trust is maintaining a two-hundred year old mill and 10 acres of surrounding woodland (see Figures 6.9, 6.10 & 6.11).

Figure 6.9: Hough Windmill, Swannington c1930



(Source: Swanning Heritage Trust, 2012)

Figure 6.10: Hough Windmill, Swannington before the Swannington Heritage Trust began restoration, 1994



(Source: Swanning Heritage Trust, 2012)

Figure 6.11: Hough Windmill, Swannington after restoration, 2002



(Source: Swanning Heritage Trust, 2012)

On its website, the group highlight that at least five windmills have at some time in the past operated on the high land at the north end of the village and its current project is the construction of a brake wheel. The group is also documenting a series of heritage walks around the village of Swannington.

In contrast, some groups meet at more generic public or community buildings, as discussed in the previous section on 'meeting places'. However they may also carry out activities at other places where they are more involved rather than just using the place as a meeting venue. For example, the Friends of Rosliston Wood usually hold their meetings at a local pub in Rosliston village. However, they are active and play a more significant role at the three woodland areas in Rosliston which they are responsible for managing. Another group which also holds meetings in a pub but carries out more practical activities at other places is the Burton Conservation Volunteers. The Burton Conservation Volunteers group is involved in the management of various places

around the Burton and Lichfield areas.⁴⁶ It has allotments and its own tree nursery off Anglesey Road in Burton and does regular work on the reed beds and footpaths at Branston Water Park, also in Burton on Trent (Burton Conservation Volunteers, 2011) Another conservation group is the Charnwood Sunday Volunteers, who in contrast to the independent group, the Burton Conservation Volunteers, is part of the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust (LRWT). The Charnwood Sunday Volunteers is also led by a paid reserves officer from LRWT rather than being purely run by volunteers as with the Burton Conservation Volunteers. However, in terms of place involvement these two conservation groups do have some similarities, with the Charnwood Sunday Group taking part in regular conservation tasks to manage various places, albeit all LRWT sites, across the Charnwood area. The Charnwood Sunday Group does not have a regular indoor meeting place. It is associated with various other LRWT conservation groups who have talks and social evenings arranged at various locations, including in The National Forest at Ashby Methodist Chapel, Ashby-de-la-Zouch and at Woodhouse Eaves Village Hall, Charnwood (Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust 2012).

Another environmental group which holds talks at a range of places is the county-based group, the Derbyshire Ornithological Society. Its indoor meeting scheduled for early 2013 are to be held at the Friends Meeting House, Chesterfield, The Evergreen Club, Allestree, Derby and Methodist Church Rooms, Buxton, all venues outside The National Forest. The Derbyshire Ornithological Society also has a yearly programme of field trips to various bird-spotting venues both across Derbyshire and the surrounding areas, for example Albert Village Lake, Willington Gravel Pit and Foremark Reservoir (in The National Forest) and Cannock Chase (Staffordshire) and Attenborough Nature Reserve (Nottinghamshire) (Derbyshire Ornithological Society 2012). As well as having these educational talks and trips with specialist guides, the

⁴⁶ Lichfield is located outside of The National Forest

group records bird sightings from across the county of Derbyshire and has been involved in setting up a bird hide at Willington Gravel Pit, now a popular bird habitat (Interview, 2008). Therefore this group takes part in activities at a range of sites where there is a themed interest as well as meeting at different venues.

The environmental and historical interest groups' names generally reflect the places they are active within and the activities they do, although there can be some variation. The places environmental and historical groups meet in can be considered in a variety of categories including, public and community buildings, private dwellings, historical sites and sites of environmental interest. These places may be just used as a venue for the groups to meet up and have no specific relationship to the groups' activities, apart from being located in the area the groups is active. The places where the groups meet may also be used by other people from the local community or other groups meeting to use the venues for a variety of activities. Such groups or relationships between groups and the places they meet in may be considered in relation to Massey (1996)'s comments on social networks and social communities existing without a single sense of place. So although groups may be based in a particular area and meet in particular places, their social community would function even if it was somewhere else. This idea may be more applicable to environmental groups which have non-human, and species focus, where interests and activities could still take place somewhere else as long as that variety of fauna was present. However other places may be the permanent location for archives and artefacts owned by the groups and available as public resources for the visiting public and participants. In some cases groups have worked with other organisations and been involved in the restoration of old buildings, which they have then moved into. Finally, there are those groups who are most closely involved with particular places and carry out activities in places which are directly related to the groups' purpose, in that without that particular place the group would not exist in its current form. In the case of these groups,

they are more likely to have strong links to specific local cultures and histories, which Jones (2009) highlights people are actively seeking to maintain. Clark *et al* (2000) also suggest that as local areas set out on quests to develop certain identities so there can be differences in the development of places within geographical areas. For example there may have been other places which have had similar industrial heritage or local archive materials but without the actions of these local environmental and historical interest groups and their volunteers actively preserving and maintaining particular heritage and landscape features they would not have been promoted. Such groups are also examples of local residents having increased responsibility for local living space, which is highlighted by Buchecker *et al* (2003) as important for sustainable landscape development. In the next section, consideration is given to the more specific and personal involvement and relationships groups and volunteers have with different places.

Belonging and Community

Direct participation in shaping and developing local landscapes can satisfy longings for integration (Buchecker, 2003) and local participation can also potentially result in local achievements, senses of belonging, improvement to the local environment and development of 'community spirit' (Goodwin, 1998). In the case of the two volunteers below, they found a social sense of belonging through environmental volunteering with groups of people who have mutual environmental interests:

"... But just being in the outdoors and doing something that was different made the interest such a lot, because you're often working with people with a common interest in bats and bat conservation, but they have so many other areas of knowledge and expertise. Not only in the wildlife field, you are mixing with these people you would have otherwise never really been in the same social circles as but you're together for the same sort of cause. That in itself was absolutely

fascinating, and, you know, I really enjoyed that.” (Interview 18, 2008: Male Environmental group member, previously in various roles)

“... There are experts that they can contact through being with the group in particular fields within the society, there is a recorder for beetles, bugs, butterflies, diptera, dragonflies, fleas and ticks, macro moths, micro moths so I think they can get, not only going out on the walks or whatever, but to identify things there are a whole host of people they can contact. It forms, I'd say, quite a close knit society really, yeh, I mean people do tend to stay with it a while then for that reason.” (Interview 17, 2007: Male, Environmental Group Photo Librarian)

In the case of volunteer 18, there is a specific reference to ‘being in the outdoors’ which can be considered a specific type of place and may be associated with particular outdoor places in which this volunteer is active. Additionally he highlights the dimension of having contact with people from different ‘social circles’ which may be considered in relation to social ‘places’, rather than the particular geographical place the social group are in. Indeed, Massey (1996) discusses how social networks and social communities can exist without a single sense of place, through established networks, across distance and time-spaces, linking in with ideas of a global sense of place. Additionally, volunteer 17 refers to ‘a close knit society’, which may be considered in terms of social space created through mutual environmental interest and outdoor space. As Massy (1996) argues:

“Instead, then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated movements in networks of social relations and understanding, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself...” (Massey, 1996: 244)

Also volunteer 17's 'close knit society' and volunteer 18's reference to 'common interest' can also be considered as mutual wildlife interests which are not necessarily associated with particular elements of place. However, if these wildlife interests are developed through regular visits to particular places, relationships with these places may develop. For example, Gooch (2003) found that as well as friendships developing between volunteers working together regular visits to the same locations led many volunteers to develop a strong affinity to landscape and landscape features where their work continues to be undertaken. Gooch (2003) also suggests that a sense of belonging, place and social contacts help to facilitate voluntary work. Volunteers may develop a greater sense of belonging to the places where they are volunteering through increasing their knowledge and understanding of that place.

Buchecker (2003) highlights how through the involvement of residents with landscape change, social and cultural integration, places can 'co-evolve' in order to satisfy needs of residents. This may particularly be the case where people have lived in the same area throughout their lives or generations of the same families. For example, Gooch (2003a: 165) suggests that 'for families who have lived in the same area for several generations connections to the land were very strong', which was often related to the building of local knowledge. However, other people who have had significant involvement in the development of particular places may also 'co-evolve' with the places they are actively involved with. Indeed, Gooch (2003a) also argues that place identity can be developed over time through family connections, collective experiences and the development of shared values, beliefs and interests of volunteers. For example, for some volunteers in this study their interests developed through childhood experiences and stories about the local area linked to family members and for others they have become more involved in the local community and place through their involvement in volunteering. Therefore the involvement people have with the place they live in and the way it evolves will not only affect how the place changes and develops but also contribute to the way the local

community lives and their relationships with other places. Indeed individuals may choose to become involved in local place based volunteering in order to influence the way the place develops as well as to become more involved with, and part of, the local community. This quest to become more involved with decisions about, or involvement with, a local place can also be considered a way of developing a sense of belonging.

A lot of literature has highlighted the influence of the past on place identity. For example, Harvey (1996, discussed in Cresswell, 2004) highlights how the construction of memories linking people to the past can result in collective memory and identity, and suggests that this is what place is often seen as and Massey (2005: 120) discusses how engagement between space and time is also about meeting up with others who are also on their own journeys and making their own histories. Therefore the investigation and discovery of collective histories may also be considered in relation to the development of place. Having historical family links to a place can initiate an interest and/or understanding of in a particular place and the communities which have co-evolved with that place. For example, in the case of the two historical volunteers below their historical family connections to the place they live in has initiated an interest in finding out more about their family history and heritage. This has included developing their historical knowledge about the place they live in and the communities that used to live in that place, of which their ancestors were a part. Indeed, their involvement has very much led to a personal sense of 'knowing *where* they come from':

"Well its heritage isn't it, knowing what went before, knowing where you came" (Interview 36, 2008: Female, Local History Group Committee Member)

"I now know where I come from..." (Interview 2, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

The following two volunteers also highlight motivations linked to knowing where they have come from and a sense of belonging. This has led them to research their family history and develop their sense of belonging, not only to their historical family, but also to the places where they live in, where communities their families have been part of for many years have been, and still are, based. Interestingly they both refer to such interests developing as they got older, however they suggest that there can be some disadvantages to this. Interviewee 6 suggests that some effort needs to be made earlier in life, and interviewee 8 reflects regretfully on not having asked more questions when his grandmother was still alive:

“... Looking at my own lads when they’ve grown up, it’s only when they’ve gone into their thirties they have begun to ask about where they came from, where their family was from and everything else... but I think you need to have made some sort of an effort before then... I think that’s the case with a lot of people in the village – that’s why we are there, they come up with all sorts of queries.” (Interview 6, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

“Well I think as you start getting older you start looking back and you want to know more. Whereas when you are younger you don’t ask enough questions. Like I wish I’d asked my grandmother more when she was alive, you know. And now I’m thinking I wish I’d asked her this... I need to know now I am getting older. You know, I want to know where they lived and where they worked and how many children they had. I just want to know, I find it fascinating. I want to build up a picture you know, and you get quite a pleasure out of it. It’s sort of a sense of belonging [laughs], yeh.” (Interview 8, 2005: Female Local History Group Founder)

The reference both interviewees make to ‘where’ is also notable: ‘*where* they came from, *where* their family was from’ (Interview 6) and ‘I want to

know *where* they lived and worked' (Interview 8). Indeed place seems to be considered a crucial aspect of these volunteers' family history research and interests.

Place identity and roots were referred to by several historical interest volunteers, most notably in relation to their involvement in the mining history of the area, the importance of having an awareness of the past, knowing who they are and family memories. Personal roots can be considered in relation to genealogy. Genealogy can involve finding out about the places ancestors lived in and the industries in which they worked. In considering the roots of a place, Selman (1996) also suggests that rural areas may be characterised by local industries, which also contribute to a sense of local distinctiveness or the identity of a place. However, this is not just applicable to rural areas. Indeed, interviewee 4 suggests that people might be more interested in becoming involved with family history research now, as they have become increasingly 'rootless':

"There is a lack of roots and you can see that, people are looking more and more at history on TV and it's the most popular subject on TV... For a variety of reasons people have got rootless... they have moved a lot more, families have split up unfortunately, and this is why family history has become such a big thing... I mean this is a sweeping statement, but they could be very lonely... and want to know where they come from, and I think it is ironic because as people have become more rootless, it has become more important." (Interview 4, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Past-President)

Notions of roots and rootlessness are relevant to ideas of place and globalisation. For example images of stable societies, organic communities and personal relationships may become more appealing with rapid social changes and fragmentation (Crang, 2000). Indeed, globalisation and mobility may result in erosion of the ideas of place, loss of meaning and a challenge to the notion of a rooted history of a

place (Cresswell, 2004). Volunteer 6 also puts forward the ideas that discovering historical links with local cultures through family 'roots' may create a sense of belonging:

"I think it's important because it gives people an identity, because there really is very little in society that encourages people to look back and to look for roots..." (Interview 6, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

Indeed, despite greater global uniformity, people are actively seeking to maintain their local cultures and heritages (Jones, 2009). Finding out about family roots can also be directly linked to relationships with a particular place, as in the case of Volunteer 8 who refers to 'this *area*' and states that 'my roots are *here*':

"So, erm, because my family, all came from this area, well you know, some of the side of ma family, and ma great grandfather actually worked here and there is a photograph of him down stairs. So it was quite, well its part of the... my roots are here [laughs]." (Interview 8, 2005: Female Local History Group Founder)

The above examples link in with King and Clifford's (1985) findings that local history interests are important in finding roots. Places can be a way of developing understanding of place as part of a wider understanding of the world, through consideration of the complicated relationships places have with the past and other places (Cresswell, 2004).

As highlighted by Hewison (1987: 47) the past has been seen as "the foundation for individual and collective identity", creating continuity between past and present, but also as choosing to preserve certain aspects of the past influences our present. In the case of these groups mutual interests and involvement with particular aspects of local history have resulted in present social and community connections. In the case

of some family history interests, volunteers have even found that they actually 'belong' to the same 'family' as other volunteers and even people not directly involved in local history groups or their families can become interested in talking to them to find out what they have discovered about themselves and past activities and people in the local area. As well as personal identity references to roots, a number of the volunteers placed an emphasis on specific family histories linked to local places and community. For local history volunteers 2 and 14, their volunteering is linked to their local family history, memory of family, and their current voluntary activities. In the case of Volunteer 2, he is pleased to have had involvement in the restoration of local industrial archaeology, which one of his ancestors would have actually worked with:

"My family started out... in... South Derbyshire... where they'd been for quite a long time and as mining technology developed they happened, as far as I can tell they happened to be a mining family that had certain specialisms. Mining technology developed and mines got deeper and deeper, the family moved with those developments... I now know where I have come from, but I would have had no idea if I hadn't researched it" (Interview 2, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

Interviewee 2 he was directly involved in rescuing and restoring a piece of industrial archaeology which was used in the area where one of his ancestors worked in the mining industry, linking both his family history and 'heritage' with the history of the place he volunteers within. Volunteer 14 is both interested in the history of his family in the area and in the history of the property that he has purchased and currently resides in. He is pleased to have been able to move to, and buy a house in the area where his grandfather was from and in tracing more of his family history there:

"Me grandfather moved into the parish, I think in the 1920s... me father was born outside the parish, just over the boundary... I've had contact

with the parish since I could remember... I was fortunate enough to purchase a property within the parish, which is quite something... the prices are so expensive... managed to buy it at the right price thirty years ago... that's got history, something I am trying to trace."

(Interview 14, 2007: Male, Historical Group Founder Member)

These two volunteers both refer to historical family connections to the places in which they are now involved in historical interest volunteering, demonstrating example of place-related senses of belonging mediated through family ties. Interviewee 14 refers to his sense of place-relatedness in terms of his house or family parish whereas interviewee 2 refers to his sense of place more in terms of the mining industry and landscape, a working place. Therefore place-related senses of belonging may be considered at different geographical levels and in terms of different types or levels of geographical place. However not all volunteers have previous connections to the places they volunteers in. This aspect of volunteer relationships to place through volunteering will now be considered further.

Volunteering and Integration into the Local Community

There have been discussions in various pieces of research with regard to 'locals', who have lived in a particular place or have historical family connections to a particular place or area, and 'non-locals', who have moved into an place more recently, and their levels of involvement in particular community activities and volunteering in that place. This may affect, or be affected by the relationship between the people and the place they live in and their sense of belonging. For example, Little (1997) found that in order for new female rural newcomers to fit in with local rural women they needed to become involved in helping out with the local, rural, community network through community voluntary work. Indeed, in some cases this is what outsiders have done in this study. For example, involvement in a local group was important for interviewee

5 when she moved to the area. It helped her to learn about where she was now living and to gain a sense of identity in a new place:

“... Just to find out a bit more about where I was living... We are really in the country and you do need to have some sense of place I think if you are going to live anywhere at all.” (Interview 5, 2004: Female, Local History Group Chair)

So, volunteer 5 was keen to develop relationships with the new place she had moved to and the local community, and in order to do this she became involved in local history volunteering in the village. Mayerfeld-Bell (1994) also found that devoting time to volunteering, helpfulness and togetherness can be seen as an ideal of country life. Indeed interviewee 5 found that her involvement with the village local historical interest group did help her to gain contact with, and become comfortable in, the local community after moving into the village:

“... I’ve got to know quite a lot of the local people and I feel quite comfortable here because I know people and I talk to people in the shops. And that probably wouldn’t have happened if I hadn’t got involved.” (Interview 5, 2004: Female, Local History Group Chair)

Initially volunteer 5 was an outsider but she has now become comfortable and involved in the local village and community. Indeed, Crouch (2010) discusses the uncertainty of belonging as changes occur and we negotiate emotionally who we feel we are in the varied contexts in which we live. So through volunteering participants may actively change and develop their involvement and levels of belonging with a particular place.

Barriers to voluntary involvement in particular places can be considered in relation to those ‘local’ to that place and those who have moved into that place or area from elsewhere. In the case of the historical interest group interviewee 20 volunteers with, it is those living in the vicinity of

the village who have originally come from elsewhere who interested in being actively involved in historical volunteering in the village:

“The people in the village aren’t terribly interested but people from 10-15 miles away will go regularly. It is strange. That is often the case I think. We do get some local people but the majority come certainly outside the area...” (Interview 20, 2008: Male Historical Group Treasurer)

This is in agreement with the research by Fielding (2000), who found that many individuals involved with local events may be non-locals. However, it may be the case that outsiders are dismissing the efforts of rural people within their own communities, due to rural areas lagging behind urban areas in terms of finance and staff (Rogers, 1987). Another group in this study which was highlighted as attracting ‘incomers’ rather than locals was the environmental and historical interest group that interviewee 1 is involved with. He highlights that he and all the founder members of his environmental and historical interest group were ‘incomers’ and suggests that they have more ‘ability’ to be involved as volunteers:

“The thing I want to stress about this is that the original... members - were all “incomers”. There were not... old village families or anything like that...this is a very significant fact in the development of all villages, that you’ve got this moving in of... well educated and therefore relatively high earning people with... and I pick my words carefully... with a greater ability to affect... erm, public policy than the indigenous villages.” (Interview 1, 2004: Male, Environmental and Historical Group Founder)

It is interesting that this volunteer who has moved into the area from elsewhere considers ‘local’ people to be less educated and therefore to less able have an effect on public policy in that place than the ‘incomers’, which may relate to the purpose of the group (lobbying

against local developments). It is also more likely now that communities are going to be made up of a good mix of incomers and outsiders, due, as highlighted by Rochester *et al* (2010), to levels of social and geographical mobility becoming ever greater over the last century. However Crouch and Matless (1996) found that with many different individuals, places and groups now co-habiting an area the emphasis on shared community can be put under strain with tensions around sense of place. For example, tensions and strain may develop between incomers and locals involved in different groups and social circles who may have particular ideas about each other, for example volunteer 1 considers 'incomers' 'well educated' in relation to locals and volunteer 14 suggests that 'newcomers' are 'rather insular'. Such views may discourage locals and incomers from becoming involved in these particular groups, for example, in the case of interviewee 14, also from a historical interest group, 'incomers' to the local area are referred to as the ones who are 'rather insular':

"... The vast majority of people that now live in the area are now what I call 'new comers', well newish, they move into the area to become remote and live what they consider as the country life. And they become... well I think everybody is rather insular... well that's what they come for. They tuck themselves away." Interview 14 (2007) – Male, Historical Group Founder Member

This indicates that locals may have particular views of incomers, as well as 'incomers' having particular views of locals as discussed above.

Changing Places

Another aspect of place to be considered in relation to the volunteers and their environmental and historical interest groups in this study is that of The National Forest. The National Forest is where all the groups in this study are based or participate in some of their activities. Massey (1996) has suggested that social boundaries are created through

linkages with the 'outside' and understanding of sense of place can only be constructed by linking to places beyond. The National Forest is not just about The National Forest project but a name and identity which has now been ascribed to a particular place and therefore linked to the communities living and the volunteers active within it. The National Forest identity given to this place also links the area with the rest of the nation through the title 'national' forest. The strategy for The National Forest was put together between 1991 and 1994 by a development team appointed by the Countryside Commission and backed by the Government (Evans, 1998).

Hewison (1987: 47) suggests that impulses to preserve the past are related to a need to preserve parts of the self as well as creating continuity to help cope with change – 'Without knowing where we have been, it is difficult to know where we are going'. This may be particularly significant in the area now known as The National Forest, where substantial changes to the local landscape having been made prior to and since this place designation was made. For example, the closure of the last four mines between 1982-1988 (SDDC, 2012) and millions of trees have been planted in the last twenty years transforming the 200 square miles of The National Forest and creating many other valuable habitats (The National Forest Company, 2012). History can also be about the mourning of the past, as in the case of industrial archaeology (Cossons, 2000: 13). However, Hewison (1987) warns that by focusing too much on the past we can risk losing capacity for creative change in the future. Indeed, as old industries die, people come and go, landscape features erode and the climate changes, a place will move on (Massey, 2005). Changes in the local area are now considered in relation to ideas about returning the area to the way it was before the industrial developments, the significance of previous local industry, wanting to protect local heritage, links between industrial heritage and recent change and the significance of local involvement in this. The development of The National Forest as a 'new place' and the difficulties

and different experiences of The National Forest are then discussed further.

As well as providing a place for the future and future generations The National Forest is contrastingly seen by some volunteers as a way of returning the place to the way it was before industry became so prominent in the area. For example, interviewee 8 also considers The National Forest as a way of 'restoring the balance' to the local area:

"I mean South Derbyshire has always been, not a pretty place, you know with the mines and the clay holes, so they're going to put it back as it was. I mean this place was mainly woodland years and years ago before we ever thought about digging coal up. You know, so it's putting it back a little bit, restoring the balance. I think it's brilliant." (Interview 8, 2005: Female Local History Group Founder)

Parry (2006) also highlights that local residents are increasingly seeing The National Forest as an opportunity to turn losses into gains, including improvements in the physical and social environments. Interviewee 7 is also in agreement about the general improvements that the allocation of The National Forest identity and its associated changes to the local area have made:

"Yes, yes. I mean it has made things better out here really, The National Forest. Definitely from what it was, I mean it is such a big improvement, I just can't imagine what it used to be like really. I mean in that way it has been good for the area definitely." (Interview 7, 2005: Female, Historical Group Member)

Interviewee 7 also suggests such changes may mean it is difficult now to imagine what this place and its landscape was like when the industry was there. Again as with the earlier comment, the focus seems to be on improving the area. Additionally, volunteers have commented on the history of the place now known as The National Forest, in relation to

returning the area to how it was before the industry rather than making links back to the area's industrial past.

However, the study area (The National Forest) is steeped in various aspects of local historical place identity, including a number of significant industrial developments – the mines and the potteries. Even in relation to 'environmental' and landscape activities, there are links back to the industrial history of the area:

"It's very much industrial archaeology round here... we take the dog, we are blessed with beautiful countryside round here, he loves it... and the interesting thing about using the countryside is that you get to know the countryside and because it is an industrial archaeology landscape round here then you begin to see features that are man-made and not natural." (Volunteer 37, 2008: Male Historical Group Newsletter Officer)

So some volunteers see The National Forest and related developments as having improved the area through changing the landscape and getting away from the area's industrial past, whereas others highlight the benefits of having both new recreational opportunities whilst highlighting and remembering the industrial features of the past. According to interviewee 37 the local landscape has indeed been shaped by previous local industries and, in addition, he explains how through his current recreational activities of walking the dog he encounters local place history. Therefore to volunteers who are aware of the history of this place, the landscape features left by the industrial industries of the past may still be present and visible. Interviewees 5 and 3 also refer to the importance of the past industries and having a way of moving forward from the decline of these industries while retaining awareness of the local historical place identity and culture that shaped the area:

"Well it seems... very important to the people who live here... I think it is a sense of identity in a sense of continuation and it also can help when a community... suffered from a period of depression, as this one has,

to... it's a sense of continuity... acknowledging the past and not forgetting... I think it can have sort of a psychologically... important effect." (Interview 5, 2004: Female, Local History Group Chair)

So it may be said that some volunteers are keen to forget the past where as others are keen to remember it. Continuity between the past industries and the present environmental and landscape developments are seen as important to the local communities by volunteer 5 and others, and senses of place are also seen as based around how the places were in the past. Indeed, Eureka Park, the focus of one of the groups in this study, was previously a site associated with the coal, clay and pottery industries (Friends of Eureka Park, 2005). Additionally, there is Sharpe's Pottery in Swadlincote, previously a kiln associated with the making of local pottery and toilets, which as discussed earlier now houses the local tourist information centre, a museum on the local pottery heritage, the Magic Attic group and other organisations. Such examples may be considered 'heritage zones', which as discussed by Cresswell (2004: 85) provide a way of placing memory through the social memory and the production of places.

For interviewee 3, an environmental volunteer, awareness of the past of places is also important for future place developments:

"Well they [people] can't proceed into the future if they don't know where they have come from. Quite simply, if they do proceed into the future without reference to the past, the future looks pretty bleak and grim." (Interview 3, 2004: Male, Environmental Group Member)

Such comments may be considered in relation to remembering and having awareness of the tight knit industrial communities that were previously associated with the place. For example, Delanty (2010: 9) highlights that realisation of community can be about 'recovery of what has been lost', particular social phenomenon (e.g. collective identities), and longing for community. It can also be considered in relation to

earlier discussions about 'knowing where you come from' and a personal sense of belonging in a place.

As discussed earlier, the place now known as The National Forest contains areas which were previously places used for mining. As highlighted by Crang (1998), there can be deep bonds within mining communities, and amongst their contrasting industrial and rural landscapes. For historical interest volunteers 9 (below) and 5 (above), it is important to be proud of local heritage, to keep track of local changes and to protect local history and cultures so that they are not lost:

"... Things change so quickly and there are a lot of people, who would like to stamp out the local history and the dialects of the area, and there's a lot of people who want to keep them, and I think it is right that it should be preserved. I mean people round here, the generation, they are proud of their heritage..." (Interview 9, 2005: Male, Historical Group Member and past-Chair)

As well as the heritage of the area, interviewee 9 refers to local dialects and highlights that there are people keen to preserve these local dialects and local history but that contrastingly there are others who are not. This may be considered in relation to Crouch and Parker's (2003) suggestion, that memory is re-worked through interactions with. So, for example, if those who want to 'stamp out' certain local histories are successful in presenting or hiding certain aspects of the local history of a particular place, changed versions of local histories may be passed on to future generations. Interviewee 9 also refers to the rapid changes which are taking place, which may be related to the landscape changes which have taken place over recent years through the development of The National Forest, as well as earlier changes prior to The National Forest.

Johnson (2007) suggests that in contemplating the past, the present cannot be ignored without concealing the links between the past and

the present. Indeed, interviewee 26, from a group with both historical and environmental interests, is pleased to see the tree planting as a result of The National Forest project and understands that there have been 'tree planting experiments' within The National Forest in relation to finding out what will grow best on the post-industrial landscapes. This shows that there has been consideration of the past when planning the tree planting within The National Forest:

"Yes, it is because it has put back a lot of the trees that we did lose. I mean we did lose a lot in the village because of subsidence and it does make a difference in the village to see trees... .. I don't know... I am sure trees throughout the area would be welcomed... I am sure they have a part to play in enhancing the area around us because there have been so many collieries around here and they have all been flattened I know... they are trying out experiments to see what sort of trees grow best on the remains of the coal heaps... from that they will be able to put more in the other areas where it is all barren at the moment." (Interview 26, 2008: Female Environmental and Historical Interest Group Member)

Both interviewees 14 and 26 express how The National Forest project has improved local places through improving the barren landscapes left by industry. The changes that The National Forest has made to the local landscape are emphasised in Figures 6.12 and 6.13.

Figure 6.12: Sence Valley before Restoration



(Source: National Forest Company, 2011)

Figure 6.13: Sence Valley after Restoration



(Source: National Forest Company, 2011)

Thomas (1983) suggests that as social change has accelerated the desire to preserve visible symbols of continuity in particular trees has increased. Volunteer 26 also refers to the importance of The National Forest as a place for future generations:

“Because it’s something we’ve got to get a hold onto – for future generations so that people know what is there and what can be seen...”
(Interview 26, 2008: Female Environmental and Historical Interest Group Member)

Selman and Parker (1997) suggest that active local residents may see their voluntary involvement as a social duty or responsibility. They also suggest that active citizens have a greater sense of responsibility and duty. Therefore those already active in the area, such as the environmental and historical interest volunteers, may also see themselves as having some sort of duty or responsibility to the place now known as The National Forest. For example, interviewee 6 suggests that the success of The National Forest is also about communities taking responsibility:

“... I think its success or otherwise will depend upon the communities taking on the responsibility for their own patch.” (Interview 6, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

So this volunteers opinion could in some ways be considered a critique of The National Forest and promotion of group action. This also links in with ideas of the ‘Big Society’ and the government’s targets for promoting a more ‘robust civil society’ as discussed by Hobson (2011). However, volunteer 24’s group has been directly involved with The National Forest and they have also directly contributed to changes in their local area. Volunteer 24’s highlights that their environmental interest group’s contributions have also had wider resulting implications and benefits for the area. This volunteer believes that her group’s

activities have encouraged visitors not only to its particular site but the wider area and boosted the local economy:

“I think we have helped because it brings people to the site. I mean for £30 you can plant a tree in the memorial woods and watch it grow over the years and your family can watch it grow and it will go on for ever... I think it brings people in... there must be well over 700 trees, if you think everyone is dedicated to someone, you know and when people come to the area... People meet... and go up to the memorial woods and then they see sometimes for the first time what we’ve got... and it is good...”
(Interview 24, 2008: Female Environmental Group Founder and Chair)

Indeed, some volunteers and groups are more involved with The National Forest than others. Interviewee 24 also believes her group is intrinsically linked to The National Forest as it has been ‘given’ areas by The National Forest to plant native trees and bulbs:

“...National Forest has sort of ‘given us’ the areas... We even plant fruit trees - that is for anybody really. All the bulbs and trees we plant are native and we plant fruit trees for the birds and animals and different things. We try to keep it as native and as British as we can” (Interview 24, 2008: Female Environmental Group Founder and Chair)

The two volunteers above both consider having involvement in the place now known as The National Forest as a way of contributing to the success of The National Forest, however volunteer 6 suggests that this needs to be driven by communities themselves whereas volunteer 24’s involvement has been directly supported and encouraged by The National Forest. Relationships between community groups and other organisations, such as the National Forest Company, can also be considered in relation to Cloke’s (2003) discussion on interactive governance, where shared goals and agendas will need to be negotiated. Interviewee 24 is also directly involved with the development of new, environmental places within The National Forest

and the benefits of these 'new' places. Westerhus (1998) similarly talks of the functional benefits of trees, including for wildlife, and suggests that the planting of trees over a number of years will allow the local community to become used to the new habitat. So groups may become embedded within and a significant part of The National Forest, with links created between The National Forest and the activities and identities of these groups.

Indeed, a feature of The National Forest that volunteers are keen to see developed further is the expansion of woodland habitats. Interviewee 15, an environmental and historical interest volunteer, hopes that The National Forest will expand in order to link up habitats and wildlife corridors from further afield:

"Grow! [Laughs]... grow - we just want more trees... we want to keep The National Forest getting bigger and bigger. I think it's a wonderful idea. You know they used to say that a squirrel could go from the Forest of Arden to Sherwood Forest without putting its foot on the ground [laughs]. Be nice if they could do that again, wouldn't it! Don't think it will, not with the motorways anyhow." (Interview 15, 2007: Female Environmental and Historical Group Founder)

Therefore this volunteer can see benefits of The National Forest designation and encourages further future development. Additionally, Interviewee 18, an environmental interest group volunteer highlights the opportunities for habitat development, suggesting further developments but also referring to their lack of knowledge of local habitat development place:

"As I understand, one of the advantages of The National Forest would be the continuous habitat... anything that helps join up and stops the fragmentation of habitat has got to be a positive thing, but I have no idea what they are doing and how they manage the woodland..."

(Interview 18, 2008: Male, Environmental Group Member, previously in various roles)

Indeed, The National Forest does have its own Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) and aims to develop wildlife corridors through knitting together 47,000 acres of new and existing woodlands, hedgerows, meadows, heathland and wetlands (Parry, 2006).

Interviewee 14, a historical interest volunteer, highlights The National Forest as something he would rather have than not and refers to governmental involvement in the improvements rather than the involvement of his group or other local volunteers and communities:

“Well, we realise that we are a very scenic area... We’ve got The National Forest as well, we’re a part of The National Forest ... once the mining finished, because that’s what prompted it... I think it was a way of the government tidying up the old coal and clay workings. And I mean I used to work for the Coal Board so I’ve seen it from the other side. But, I mean it’s been a good thing and it certainly has tidied up lots of the scars, erm of the mineral extraction... I think I’d rather have it than not have it.” (Interview 14, 2007: Male, Historical Group Founder Member)

Interviewee 14 does however refer to being part of The National Forest showing some recognition of being his group as part of this place. Interestingly he does not talk about the preservation of any of the features left by local industries or any direct or community involvement. This may be considered in relation to what Crang (1995) highlights as growing and changing public concern over the role of the past in contemporary Britain.

So the place now known as the National Forest is rapidly changing and some of these changes can be related directly to the designation of the area as ‘The National Forest’. One of main changes taking place is the

planting of trees and related landscape changes where previously there has been a variety of industry, including mining. Some local volunteers see their involvement with The National Forest as an important part of these local changes and generally the changes made by The National Forest project to the area are seen as beneficial and positive. Such positive changes include 'improving' the local landscape and returning places within the area to wooded, post-industrial landscapes. Through these changes it may be considered that some of the industrial history of the area could be lost. However, the industrial landscapes have featured in the new ones, with tree species planted to suit the post-industrial soils and man-made industrial features mixed in with new natural ones. Indeed, although keeping features and memories of past histories may be contested, the industrial past of this place has and indeed will influence current and future changes associated with The National Forest. With all these changes to the area, the place identity of The National Forest is developing and this will be considered next.

A New Place Identity

As highlighted by Gooch (2003a) place identity can be developed over time through collective experiences and through the development of shared values, beliefs and interests of volunteers. Therefore in considering the identity of the place now known as The National Forest both past experiences and knowledge will need to be considered along with current changes and current community and volunteer involvement. For Interviewee 5, a historical interest group volunteer, The National Forest will give an identity to the area, linking up smaller 'pockets' of local identity:

"I think it is going to be useful for the area and sort of giving a new identity to the area, which it has to have because I mean, the old one did disappear with the mining industry... I realised the Midlands was huge and there were pockets of, of, with local identity... I think anything like The National Forest, The National Forest is, is a good idea.

Because, and so I think it will give identity to the parts of, of the Midlands....” (Interview 5, 2004: Female, Local History Group Chair)

Interviewee 5 also suggests that the area did previously have an identity linked to the mining industry however that this identity has now been lost and that The National Forest will provide a new identity for the area. The development of this new place identity can be considered both in relation to those living and volunteering in the area and how the place is viewed by those outside of the area. Parry (2006: 157) suggests that the enhanced identity and ‘growing sense of place’ created by The National Forest will improve tourist recognition of the area and enhance the visitor potential. Indeed, this self-identified ‘outsider’, interviewee 5, also refers to the local area prior to The National Forest as seemingly ‘characterless’, somewhat contradicting her other reflections on the mining identity of the area:

“... Well, as an outsider seemed to be rather a sort of characterless area, although I’m sure no-one doing local history would say that it was a characterless area... The National Forest development should help, and that’s sort of the outsider’s view of it rather than sort of someone who might have lived here always. They may have a different opinion. I mean I think it is a good thing with centres like Conkers and places for people to go.”(Interview 5, 2004: Female, Local History Group Chair)

So, Volunteer 5 also recognises that her views on The National Forest area are personal and are most likely to be different to those of someone who is traditionally from the area, also recognising that doing local history volunteering helps to see that the area is indeed not as characterless as it might first have appeared. Indeed, she highlights that as an outsider the development of The National Forest does seem like a positive development and has given the area more of a character and place identity. However she also suggests that her volunteering has given her more of a local perspective and that therefore she is now also more aware of the pre-existing local heritage and identity, which she

otherwise would have been unaware of. This can be considered in relation to Samuel's (1994) suggestion that people draw their own meanings from encounters with the English countryside and heritage parks, rather than being passive consumers of heritage culture.

The influence of The National Forest on the identity of environmental and historical groups and their volunteers themselves can also be seen. For example, interviewee 6, from a local historical interest group, feels that The National Forest has given his group meaning and focus, linking in with the group and volunteers' pride and sense of purpose:

"I think it has given them a focus, taught that what we've been trying to do as a little group in a little village that's in the centre of Leicestershire in middle England can be important in effecting quite an important major development of England eventually." (Interview 6, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

Interviewee 6 also considers The National Forest in relation to both local people, giving his group of volunteers more of a purpose as well as the more national implications, describing it as 'quite an important major development of England'. A similar view is also expressed by interviewee 8, also a local history volunteer:

"Erm, well I hope it sort of expands more and I'd like to see it, I mean it has really put South Derbyshire on the map. I walk down to the bottom of my street and I've got walks and things to do and activities for the children." (Interview 8, 2005: Female Local History Group Founder)

Indeed, even in the early days of The National Forest, Sidaway (1998: 106) suggests that local communities were taking The National Forest concepts in their stride and were welcome to the related landscape renewal and suggestions of it providing a stronger local identity. Sidaway (1998) also highlights that a key part of the vision for the National Forest is about creating new recreational opportunities, linking

in to interviewee 8's comments about having walks close by. It has also been suggested by Sharpley (1996) that countryside recreation is often based around unplanned, informal and spontaneous activities. Indeed several volunteers said that they would like to see further expansion of the forest with more trees, walks and activities. These local, environmental place experiences can also be considered as significant in developing environmental volunteers of the future. Indeed, as discussed in Chapter 5 and childhood outdoor experiences mark the beginning of many a volunteers' interests in the environment.

Following on, the implications for these environmental developments are now considered in relation to how the area is seen in terms of environmental value and habitats. Indeed, the new National Forest identity seems to have implications in relation to amateur scientific recording and monitoring. For example, interviewee 17 states that amateur scientific data recording has begun to take place more actively in The National Forest area due to habitat creation:

"They have created lots of habitat that we wouldn't have had before for various birds, and already the records for things like the Derbyshire Ornithological Society are starting to record what new is moving into these woodlands that the woodlands are being walked or monitored if you like on a regular basis, monitored is probably too strong a word, too scientific, but there are people visiting these smaller woodlands, purely with a view to see what bird life and flowers and so on are cropping up in there... The Forestry Centre organise a couple of moth watches each year and usually the person who runs them is someone from the DANES." (Interview 17, 2007: Male, Environmental Group Photo Librarian)

Voluntary biological monitoring activities can result in a growing relationship between the volunteers and space (Lawrence, 2006). Additionally, if there is an increased in involvement the local population's involvement in biological monitoring, it may further deepen

their understanding of the landscape and create an increased likelihood of living within ecological and sustainable limits, as found in the research by Gooch (2003). People may then begin to feel that they have a greater involvement with and sense of belonging to The National Forest, which may further develop a new place identity and sense of place.

The development of transport links is another feature which some of the volunteers hope will be a part of The National Forest. Enhanced transport links is likely to increase the connections between The National Forest and other places and communities, which are then more likely to visit and encounter The National Forest. A couple of volunteers (Interviews 1 and 5) refer to the potential for development and re-development of the 'transport' links of the canal and railway in The National Forest, again suggesting a further development possibility for The National Forest:

"Well, I would like to see The National Forest and the canal linked up... I think that would probably bring a lot more people into the area and that can't be bad for it... I'd like to see the canal, the, The National Forest project sort of integrating to improve the sort of, to improve the area and to make it more attractive to tourists." (Interview 5, 2004: Female, Local History Group Chair)

"...Where we have The National Forest and we have the rail line going right through by Conkers, literally you could throw a pebble out of the train into the place [Laughs]. And no station, not open, and yet, they say, we know these facts are true, last year, there had something like two hundred and twenty thousand visitors and they all came by car. 0.1% could have walked but again there are no buses.... I hope a solution will be found..." (Interview 1, 2004: Male, Environmental and Historical Group Founder)

In fact, one of the groups in this study, the Ashby Canal Association, is working towards and promoting the restoration and re-connection of the Ashby canal. It has also recently announced on their website that, as part of the recently approved, and highly controversial, UK Coal Minorca Open Cast site application, money has been set aside for a raised crossing on Gallows Lane which will enable the canal to pass beneath the road, as well as furthering the canal extension and construction (Ashby Canal Association, 2011). Having greater connections with other places and the wider area will also be a way of increasing awareness and knowledge of The National Forest, therefore contributing to the 'national identity' this place strives to achieve.

Difficulties – Different Place Experiences

The above sections may give the indication that the designation of The National Forest in this area has gone down well with local historical and environmental interest groups and their volunteers. However, the project has not been completely without difficulties. Although some groups (14) have experienced a degree of integration with The National Forest, and one even have set up to be part of The National Forest, some of the pre-existing groups have found understanding and potential involvement with The National Forest less appealing. For example, in interviewee 21's opinion, there is a clear difference between the people who come to the heritage site his group is involved with and those who visit other parts of The National Forest, although his group's site is actually based within The National Forest. He considers his voluntary group and The National Forest as quite separate entities, and in an interesting discourse, he also refers to the people who visit both his group's site and The National Forest as 'customers':

"... Because we are on a different sphere entirely... as far as we can we work together quite well... we'll intermingle, they are not taking our customers and we are not taking theirs..." (Interview 21, 2008: Male, Local History Group Founder Member)

This may link in to some volunteers seeing both, their group's activities, and The National Forest as related to tourism and attracting visitors. Indeed, UK tourism has long been associated with the historical past, which is increasingly being packaged as a new tourist attraction (HLF, 2010). Additionally, Interviewee 21's comments show that, there is little awareness of the partnerships that make up The National Forest. Westerhuis (1998) suggests that many local communities have a good understanding, enthusiasm and continuity with the area however preconceived ideas may discourage involvement. By contrast, my study suggests that sometimes volunteers are finding it difficult to relate to and understand The National Forest:

"Well, well I find it difficult to understand exactly what it's about. I mean obviously it's about planting a National Forest - That's fine I can accept that. But The National Forest Centre, what that does, I find it difficult really to focus on how that services North West Leicestershire... I mean the first priority obviously is in planting trees, I can see that, but now with Conkers, they are about providing tourism potential. And it seems to me the whole focus of attention has now actually taken a gigantic shift." (Interview 2, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

Part of The National Forest strategy is recognising the interdependence between forestry, leisure, tourism, farming and agricultural diversification (Evans and Jackson, 1998). Despite this, there are most definitely some concerns amongst the local environmental and historical interest volunteers that the place they are active within has become The National Forest. This may mean that these volunteers see The National Forest more of a project happening in the place they volunteers in rather than a place itself. For example, interviewee 2 also comments on The National Forest's lack of awareness of, and interest in, both the Charnwood area they are based in and his particular historical interest group:

“And for groups out in Charnwood Forest, which is equally attractive and us really in the middle, there seems to be very little, very little care or consideration at all. Hopefully it’s changing as I say, because we are now on the [National Forest] map... there is still a total unawareness of what we do. I’d love to know how many people at The National Forest have actually visited... I mean we probably get a couple of thousand people through it, Sunday afternoons.” (Interview 2, 2004: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

Westerhuis (1998) has highlighted that in order to achieve successful integration of The National Forest local communities have to be properly represented, but this process would appear to have fallen short in relation to many local history and environmental groups. Additionally, there also concerns amongst some of the volunteers about the potential impact of them getting involved directly with The National Forest. In this case, The National Forest may be considered as something social which can be participated in, rather than in terms of having mapped boundaries. This historical interest group volunteer sees his group as separate from The National Forest despite being voluntarily active in the physical place designated as such. He also has concerns expressed about ‘The National Forest’ actively taking advantage of voluntary groups for their own means:

“The people at The National Forest, or Conkers or Rosliston, want the groups to do all the work and they get all the benefit, so no, we haven’t participated as yet.” (Interview 9, 2005: Male, Historical Group Member and past-Chair)

This comment relates to some bad experiences the group have had with other organisations in the past that used the group to gain data on local heritage and then used it for their own financial gain without giving the group any recognition. This has made this group somewhat wary of contributing to projects developed by larger organisations, which can be

considered in relation to Lawrence's (2010) findings that volunteers can perceive both threats and opportunities regarding their data.

So the above interviewee can be said to see the National Forest more as a concept, which he does not see as beneficial for the group to be involved with. Interestingly, in The National Forest's early business plan presented to the government, it is proposed that participation in The National Forest and its strategy should be entirely voluntary (Evans, 1998). Finally, another concern expressed by historical and environmental interest volunteers in relation to 'involvement' with The National Forest is finances. For example, interviewee 11 tells of how no financial support was forthcoming from The National Forest to support voluntary group involvement with their projects and activities:

"There was another group who approached us about something to do with The National Forest saying that they were going to build this archive up and asking if we wanted to get involved with them and they were going to build this archive about this and this archive about that and I thought that in a way it is already here. And then when we asked where the funding was coming from or what funding we would get for helping them, they never wrote back to us. So draw your own conclusions..." (Interview 11, 2005: Male, Historical Group Founder and Chair)

In this case it is also suggested that The National Forest is trying to re-create features and resources which already exist in the area.

Volunteer relationships with the changing place known as The National Forest are not particularly focused on the idea of this place as a national resource. Some volunteers are interested in the return of the lost habitats with some keen to forget the way it was when dominated by industry, whereas others are more aware of keeping old industrial heritage features amongst the new developments. This can be linking to ideas of belonging to a community which historically has strong

industrial heritage and wanting to preserve this identity and other local histories. Indeed in some cases it has been recognised that The National Forest has considered the history of the area in its developments as well as making improvements to the local landscape for future generations. For some volunteers their involvement in local changes will influence the success of developments however there is some lack of knowledge and understanding of The National Forests' activities and plans. There now follows four case studies considering environmental and historical interest volunteering and place.

Case Studies

These case studies aim to provide an insight into four different groups and the places they are involved in. One environmental and three historical interest groups are considered in the case studies. These case studies were chosen as these groups' activities focus on place at various different levels. Claymills Pumping Engines Trust focuses on a very specific collection of buildings in the town of Burton on Trent, The Friends of Rosliston Wood's activities are based in three woodlands in the parish of Rosliston, the Charley Heritage Group focuses on the parish of Charley and the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group considers the old coalfield area of South Derbyshire. Two of the groups (one environmental and one historical) focus their activities on specific sites (Rosliston Wood and Claymills Pumping Station), one of the groups focuses on a particular place within The National Forest, the Parish of Charley, and the other group covers a wider area, which is part of a county (South Derbyshire). These case studies have been chosen for this chapter in order to gain a greater understanding of individual groups' relationships with places in The National Forest. These groups have relationships with different types of places and 'place' on different scales. Charley Heritage group focuses at the parish level in rural Leicestershire, within the ancient forest of Charnwood was located. The Friends of Rosliston Wood, in rural Derbyshire, focuses on three new woodlands, in a parish with a village, which were set up with

The National Forest. The Claymills Pumping Engine Trust is responsible for managing the Claymills Pumping Engine in Staffordshire on the outskirts of Burton on Trent. And finally, there is the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group, based at Gresley Old Hall close to Swadlincote, South Derbyshire focusing its activities on the mining heritage of South Derbyshire.

Claymills Pumping Engine Trust, Stretton, Burton upon Trent, East Staffordshire

The Claymills Pumping Engine Trust is the only historical interest group in this study which is based in Staffordshire. The group is also one of five groups in the study based in or around the town of Burton on Trent and is one of 12 historical interest groups associated with a particular location. Claymills Pumping Engines Trust is a charitable company and registered charity, with a board of directors, who are the managing Trustees (Interview, 2008). The group started out restoring the site with the initial guidance of Severn Trent Water PLC (who at the time owned the site) with them idea that it could eventually be opened to the public. It then became a more profession business, and is now officially becoming a registered working museum (Interview, 2008).

The Claymills Pumping Engine Trust is based on the outskirts of Burton on Trent (also known as Burton upon Trent). Burton straddles the river Trent, and is internationally known as "The brewing capital of Great Britain", and is also famous for Marmite - with spent brewers' yeast being turned into Marmite in the town since 1902 (Burton on Trent Leisure Guide, 2009). The building of the Claymills Pumping Station was completed in 1886 and was developed due to Burton upon Trent having an acute sewage problem by the mid 1800's due to the large number of breweries situated in the area (Claymills Pumping Engine Trust, 2012). See Figure 6.14:

Figure 6.14: Claymills Pumping Station



(The Local History of Burton on Trent 2012 & Claymills Pumping Engine Trust, 2012 - photography by Ian Shipley)

The Claymills Pumping Engine Trust officially began in 1993, when a group of people got together to set up an organisation to protect the Victorian sewerage pumping station from scheduled demolition, and with the help of English Heritage it got the site listed and therefore protected. Interestingly the idea of a preservation group for Claymills Pumping Engine was initiated earlier than this by Severn Trent Water PLC who put some information in the Stationary Engine Research Group (SERG) (which has produced steam engine journals since 1970) newsletter⁴⁷ and initial members of the group all came from SERG, with information circulated to the Burton Civic Society, Derby Archaeological Society and others generating further membership (Claymills Pumping Engine Trust, 2012). The Claymills Pumping Engine Trust (2012) also tell that at some point the site became a grade II* listed building and that Severn Trent would not let the group go onto the site until certain

⁴⁷ Date unknown

work was carried out for safety reasons. Finally, in 1993 the site was officially handed over to the group, which formed a charitable trust and began regular site working parties.

The Claymills Pumping Engine Trust's work is predominantly based at and focused on the running and maintenance of the Claymills Pumping Station in Burton on Trent, Staffordshire. Occasionally an information stand is held at local festivals and fayres, which often results in local people offering to come and help, and some external talks are presented at local history society premises (Interview, 2008). Indeed the group has strong local connections. It also has local school history clubs and village and other local history societies coming for tours and talks on the site (Interview, 2008), see Figure 6.15:

Figure 6.15: Children on a School visit to Claymills Pumping Station



(Source: Claymills Pumping Engine Trust, 2012)

The Claymills Pumping Engine site is open to visitors and volunteers on Thursdays and Saturday, as well as during special steaming weekends. It is £5 for visitors to attend a steaming event and volunteers talk to visitors as they explore telling them about the site and the equipment and answering questions. The site also hosts a mini steam train for visiting children to ride on and in it is the largest and most impressive engine room the group has a collection of items used by the workers and records of productivity of the engines, as well as a report about an engine accident and the resulting repairs.

Claymills Pumping Station houses the oldest, working electrical generation equipment in the country with records dating back to 1883, and is now one of the largest tourist attractions in Burton with visitors from across the world (Interview, 2008). In the teashop there is a notice board showing engines that has been restored by the group and other engines that were originally on the site that were moved elsewhere and are still being searched for. A number of engines that had been removed have been found again, returned to the site and restored to working order. Some engines are not the originals but are the same as the ones that would have originally been on the site.

However, despite the history of Burton on Trent, local volunteers have general concerns about lack of preservation of their local heritage in East Staffordshire:

“... There has been a lot of criticism of the local council for not protecting the heritage around them... Because Burton has an old history, and there are very few traces of it left...and what is left will disappear” (Interview, 2008)

Indeed, in relation to its wider role in promoting local heritage and although on the border of The National Forest, the group mainly promotes its site through the ‘National Forest and Beyond’ tourist

leaflet. Indeed the volunteer I spoke to identified The National Forest as the area the group and pumping station felt most part of:

“... People do identify with The National Forest. It is very difficult... I’ve only got to drive a few miles from my house in Staffordshire, a few miles and I am in Derbyshire and about 5 miles the other way around and I am in Leicestershire. I am in a little corner of Staffordshire and we identify – we are in the West Midlands, and a few miles the other way we are in the East Midlands. I don’t identify where I am with the West Midlands or East Midlands but I do identify with The National Forest. It is getting its own identity and we are part of it” (Interview, 2008)

Summary – The Claymills Pumping Engine Trust was set up in order to prevent the demolition of an old sewage pumping station on the outskirts of Burton on Trent built in the 1880s. Volunteers are actively involved with restoration and maintenance of the pumping station, as well as providing an educational experience for the visiting public and organised groups alike. The site has regular visitors and is seen as a valuable heritage resource and tourist attraction, The Trust volunteers see the site and their group more as part of The National Forest than in relation to the county they are based within.

Friends of Rosliston Wood, Rosliston Village, South Derbyshire

The Friends of Rosliston Wood is an environmental interest group which was founded around 1995 when the new forestry centre at Rosliston opened. It was initiated by the Forestry Centre and its partners, including The National Forest, making it the only group in the study to have been formed due to the designation of the area as The National Forest. Therefore the Friends of Rosliston Wood is not a grass-roots group. The initial idea was that the group would give villagers an opportunity to get involved with the forestry centre and encourage them to make use of it (Interview, 2008). The Friends of Rosliston Wood is small group of volunteers that manages and

maintains three separate memorial plots in and around Rosliston Forestry Centre, Bluebell Memorial Wood, Snowdrop Memorial Wood and Daffodil Memorial Wood. The group has approximately 10 active volunteers involved in managing the woods and the Friends are also involved with the Rosliston Forestry Centre Community Liaison Group (Interview, 2008). The volunteers involved in the group live locally (in and around Rosliston) are mostly over 50 and mixed in gender (Interview, 2008). Therefore although it is not a grass roots group volunteers already belong to the local community and are having direct involvement with changes in their local environment. They are also having direct involvement with physical changes developed through The National Forest, planting some of the trees which will make up this new forest.

Rosliston village is in South Derbyshire, although it is only a few miles from East Staffordshire and the town of Burton on Trent. The Friends group is one of ten environmental interest groups working in The National Forest that is based in Derbyshire (and one of the 23 Derbyshire based groups considered in this study). The group is also one of approximately half (28) of the groups in the study which is based in or around a hamlet, village or town. The Friends group are one of only five environmental groups who referred to regularly holding activities at a specific site or venue. Rosliston is described by the Derbyshire UK (2011) as a farming community with a church, two village pubs (the Plough Inn and the Bull's Head), and a commuter belt with new housing which has attracted new comers to the village. Therefore this group is based in one of the more rural areas of The National Forest. The Friends of Rosliston Wood meet at the Bull's Head every two months (Interview, 2008). See Figure 6.16:

Figure 6.16: The Bull's Head Pub, Rosliston



(Source: Derbyshire UK, 2011)

Rosliston Forestry Centre was previously a farm owned by someone who lived in Rosliston village (Interview, 2008). When it was bought by South Derbyshire District Council and National Forest Enterprise with grant aid from the Countryside Commission in partnership with The National Forest Company there was some initial concern amongst locals as to what it would evolve into as nothing similar had been developed in the area before (Interview, 2008). Rosliston Forestry Centre provides information, educational and recreational facilities for visitors, local residents and school groups (Derbyshire UK, 2011).

A founder member of the group (Interview, 2008) explained that each of the memorial woods managed by the Friends started off as a field and the first two woods – Snowdrop Wood and Bluebell Wood are now fully planted. There is a leaflet for people who are interested in dedicating a tree to fill in, and anyone can buy a tree in this was (for £30). Therefore other people who are not local to the area can pay to dedicate a tree planted in Rosliston, thus allowing non-locals to having involvement with the area. This can be considered a way in which The National

Forest is a national resource. There are two planting days per year when the volunteers (and those who have bought the trees, if the wish) come along to plant the trees:

“... With help from us then we maintain the whole thing. As I say the first two are now full, the pruning, the mowing, planting the snowdrops in the snowdrop wood, the bluebells in the bluebell wood, everything else... We have now got a third area which is the daffodil wood which will be planted with daffodils and will be maintained until it becomes self-sustaining really... The new wood is on the outskirts of Rosliston so they are all very close to each other” (Interview, 2008)

The group plants and maintains native bulbs and trees, including fruit trees in the memorial woods and volunteers are actively involved with the group, planting trees and bulbs. They feel that by planting more the area is improved and additionally it attracts more people to visit Rosliston Forestry Centre:

“I think it does, I think it brings people in... there must be well over 700 trees, if you think everyone is dedicated to someone, you know and when people come to the area. I mean in the past we have had people come up to, because we have had people meet at the forestry centre from the area and go up to the memorial woods and then they see sometimes for the first time what we’ve got... and it is good...” (Interview, 2008)

So this group is not only directly making changes to the local landscape it is directly involved with and part of The National Forest both as a place and as a project. Its activities also encourage people from ‘outside’ to come into the area now known as The National Forest in order to plant or visit their memorial trees. The Friends also hope that the woods they have planted will benefit generations to come. In relation to The National Forest involvement with the group has also led to these volunteers having further involvement in their local area:

“If there are things going on at the Forestry Centre like the green flag application, we, I went last year...”

And their activities have also been recognised, along with other organisation and groups, as having important involvement:

“... Because Derbyshire CC is involved, the National Forest Company and there was a survey done of people who were visiting various... Rosliston came out top! ... We were thrilled with that as an area and a group... we are all for the same goal... young and old”

However, interestingly apart from the volunteers in the group it appears that other villagers are now less actively involved than when the group set up:

“Initially... we set up as a small group, as the names says friends of Rosliston wood... for villagers to get involved with it, to keep involved... villages make use of the site but they don't get so involved in the active side of it now”

Therefore, although the volunteers themselves are local villagers, it appears that it is just the group members involved in developing the woodlands now. This can also be considered in relation to the woods having now developed more of a wider or national appeal than local.

Summary – The Friends of Rosliston Wood is a small group involved with the planting and maintenance of memorial woods in and around Rosliston Forestry Centre and the village of Rosliston, a rural area in South Derbyshire. The group aims to encourage visitors and involvement with this specific part of The National Forest as well as creating a pleasant place for the local community and future generations who live in the village and surrounding areas. So this group are more involved in the creating of a new habitat rather than

preservation. This group and its volunteers were set up as part of The National Forest project and designation of the area as The National Forest and are therefore intrinsically linked. The volunteers meet at a pub in the village, however people can be involved in the woods nationally and beyond as anyone can pay to dedicate a tree. As well as providing a resource for future local generations the area has been nationally recognised, including the work carried out by this group, however the volunteer interviewed highlights that the local villagers are not so actively involved in managing the woodlands as they used to be.

Charley Heritage Group, the Parish of Charley, North West Leicestershire

Charley Heritage Group is a local history group situated in the small parish of Charley and covers only the parish of Charley in its investigations and activities. The Charley Heritage Group is one of 18 historical interest groups, and one of 27 groups considered in this study which are based in Leicestershire. It is also one of 42 groups associated with a particular location, and one of the 28 groups based in a particular hamlet, village or town. However, no other groups are based specifically in Charley. Charley Parish is one of the smallest parishes in Leicestershire. It has had several boundary changes over the years and currently covers 1323 hectares (3270 acres) which includes 75 dwellings and 172 electors, including thirty or so Cistercian monks of Mount St Bernard Abbey (Charley Parish Council, 2012). The group meets at the homes of members who have enough space for the group to gather and a computer. I attended a meeting of the Charley Heritage Group. This small heritage group met at a member's house in Charley, which had been a guesthouse. Meeting at a member's house means that the groups have no problems finding somewhere to meet and no venue costs for their meetings. However, there is a possibility this may discourage potential new members to become involved as the meetings are not held at a more open public venue.

The group is made up of twelve members and so is one of the smaller groups in the study, with only six other groups in the study having fewer than fifteen members. It has a committee, as is typical of the groups in this study. It does not have many younger members, in line with 28 other groups examined, with members suggesting that this is because there are not many younger people in the area. Members included people who originally came from the area and those who had moved into the area from elsewhere. So, all the volunteers in the group belong to the local community. Despite this, one volunteer felt that incomers were quite insular on the whole:

“... They move into the area to be remote and live what they consider as the country life. And erm, you know, they become very, erm, well I think everyone is rather insular” (Interview, 2007)

“Anyone can come along there’s no hard and fast rules” (Interview, 2007)

At the meeting I attended, the woman who I had contacted about the event, was host and Chair, and her husband was there as the group’s Treasurer. When the group started to arrive; they were all friendly and welcoming towards me.

The group was founded in 1999 prompted by the Millennium celebrations in order to record the situation at the Millennium and the history of Charley prior to this. This suggests that the prompt for the group formation was related more to this particular event than the place itself. The founder members wanted to record some oral history of Charley Parish for future generations and to meet and record information about the area:

“... A website, yes, and DVDs... I mean it’s got to be written down and of course oral history as well, for future generations. We’ve now got means... for recording for prosperity” (Interview, 2007)

Therefore the group are involved in the preservation of local heritage and place identity. The methods used to do this were the collection of newspaper cuttings, local walks, and archaeology. Therefore, Charley Heritage Group formed during a time when the setting up of new historical interest groups in The National Forest area was popular, in a decade when eight other new historical interest groups were also set up locally. The Charley Heritage Group produced a parish map for the Millennium, using the talents of local people and recording places and events, in a pictorial fashion, in Charley at that time. They have also involved other members of the community in particular projects.

There were nine group members at the meeting, four female and five male, of whom some worked and some were retired. A further three members sent their apologies. I was introduced to everyone at the beginning of the meeting and explained the nature of my research. The host/Chair then suggested that the members introduce themselves and tell me how they had all got interested and become involved with the group. Below are outlines of these group members and a summary of their introductions:

- Member A – A farmer, living in the area since 1962, he first got involved when the group set up and decided to do a Millennium Map.
- Members B and C – Have lived in Charley for 4 years, this couple were invited to come along by their neighbour so they could find out about the area.
- Member D – Lived in Charley from aged 4-21, and then from aged 34 to now. She has a general interest in the parish and the past.
- Member E – His grandparents and parents lived in the parish and he is interested in local history.

- Member F – The newest to join, he was born in the area, moved away at 5 and moved back 20 years ago. A few months ago he was approached by the group about the history of the reformatory in the area and has been coming to the meetings since.
- Member G – Was encouraged to join. She is not from the immediate area, but not from far away and is interested in the local history.
- Member H – Said that he ‘just attends as the Treasurer’.
- Member I – She has lived in the area for 26 years in the area and started the group for the Millennium Project.

So although the volunteer interviewed described the incomers to the parish as being ‘insular’ several of the volunteers are actually ‘incomers’. Another member is not from the parish but travels in from a nearby area. Therefore not all volunteers belonging to this group belong to the local community. Additionally, some have moved away from the area and then returned.

The group consider every meeting as a ‘social’:

“Well every meeting is a social event, isn’t it [laughs]? We have a bit of a party before Christmas. We just have a meeting where the wine is more widely flowing than usual [laughs], and mince pies, yep”

(Interview, 2007)

The group also has its own Christmas party. The main group activities are researching, recording and the creation of items:

“... We collect newspaper cuttings, because we not only want to research the past, we want to record the present for the future”

(Interview, 2007)

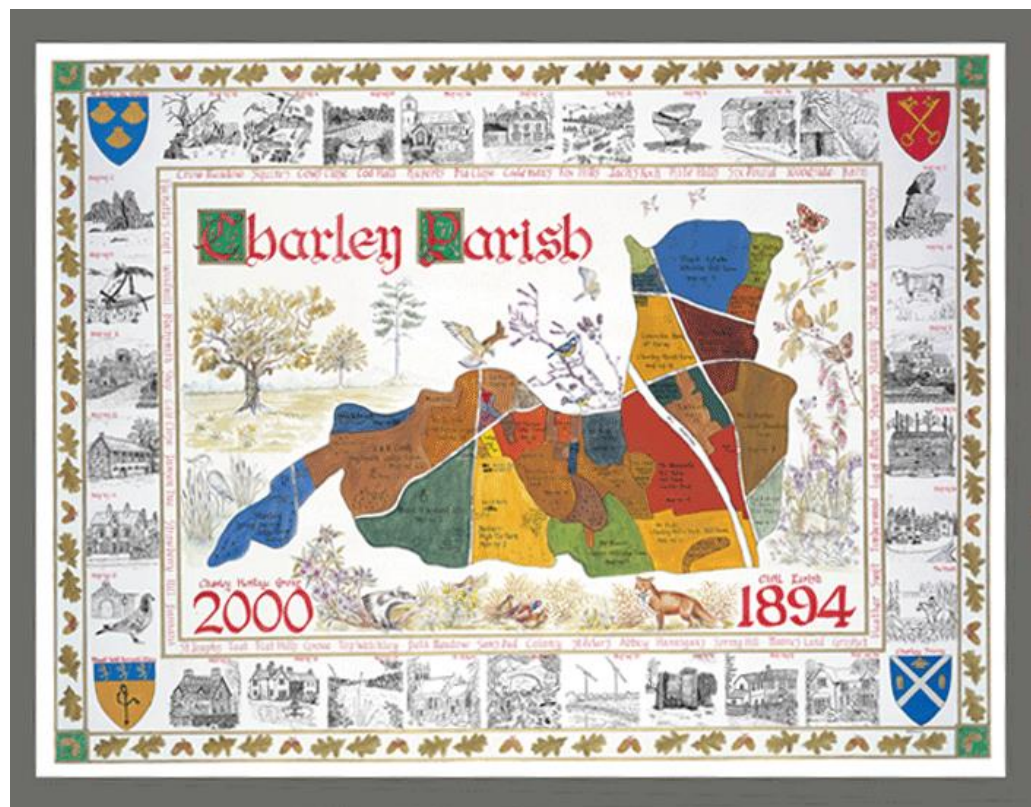
For example, as of 2000, the group was involved in producing a Millennium map (see Figure 6.17), planning a website and DVDs,

recording oral history recordings and it has had two Millennium Stones sited in the village of Charley:

“One is sited almost in the centre of the area... a big rock we had from the Oakwood Quarry. And then there is one... almost at the border of the Parish, over at Copt Oak, a similar one” (Interview, 2007)

Thus, the group have made a physical addition to the local village, related both to local history and a bigger event.

Figure 6.17: Charley Heritage Group Millennium Map



(Source: Charley Heritage Group Website, 2011)

In 2008 the group was awarded a £4,885 Awards for All Lottery grant to produce a video of a year in the life of Charley. The group hope that this will “enable them to share and experience the beauty and life in our area” with the general public (Charley Heritage Group, 2010). This highlights a pride in the place they live in an enthusiasm for sharing

information about Charley. They were also involved in making recordings of their memories of their personal experiences in Charley on tape. They are planning to produce a booklet called 'What your mother never knew'. The recordings included dangerous exploits. Member A had written down some of his stories, which he read out. He was involved in creating a jet engine in a garage (blowing the doors off) with a friend who later went on to work on jet engines for Rolls Royce. He also made a 3-wheel tandem out of 2 bikes - that could not go around corners, a motorised rain tub with water cooled by a water butt, and his own fireworks with magnesium and iron filings. He found bullets in local ammunition dumps in Charnwood Forest and on the grass verges and put them in the coal-fire at his house so that they shot out with the heat. He also reported the recent discovery of an old bomb. Member F had been involved in tree-climbing and collecting birds' eggs and watched the Lancaster's fly off and the trains on the railways. He used to put pennies on the lines to get them squashed as did Member D. They also discussed that there were quite a few tramps - mentally ill people - around after the war. Members E and F had re-stripped mopeds for mini-motors. They said that at his time, when they were children, kids were out all day and all night doing what they wanted, as long as they were home for tea. In the winter they tobogganed and sledged down the local hill with the brook at the bottom.

The group's next meeting was to be held on Oct 2007 in preparation for the parish Heritage Fair, at which they planned to have a stall. The group also promotes itself and shares the information it has gathered at the local spring fayre (at the neighbouring village), therefore linking up with other local places. As with 10 other groups in this study (including six other historical interest groups) this group meets every one-four months. However it does not meet as frequently as every month over the summer due to members having other commitments. The Charley Heritage Group is free to join and there is no charge for attending meetings, as is the case with 12 of the groups in this study, and five of

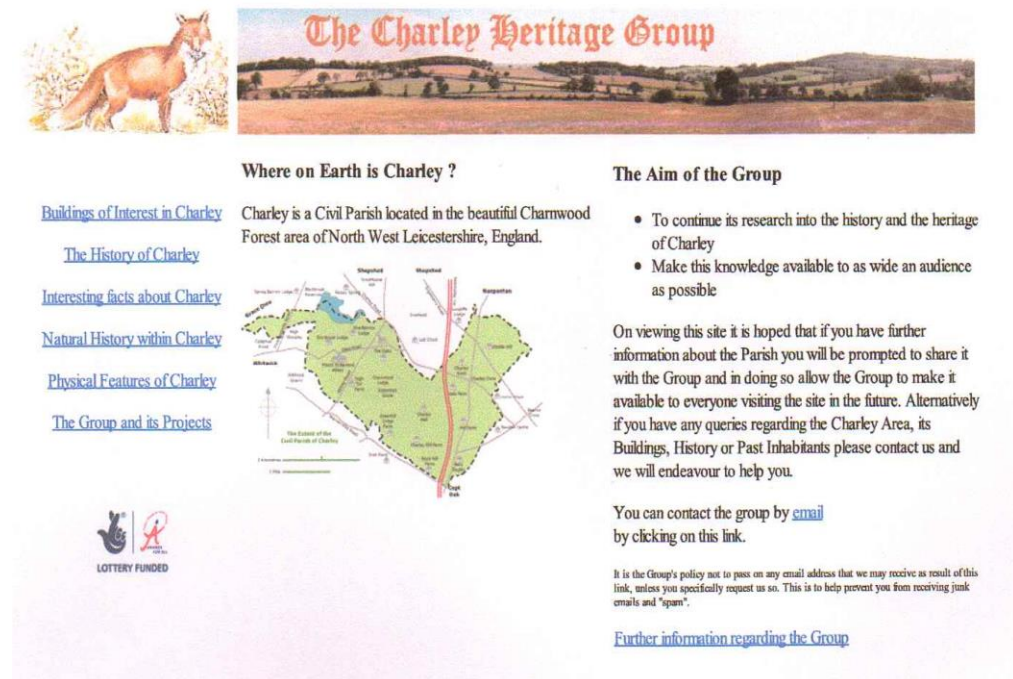
the historical interest groups. Therefore, any funding it requires needs to come from grants.

At the time of my visit, the group was also investigating the history of quarries in the area, the funding for which came from local mineral extraction companies. Thus, linking the local place history with wider industrial developments (quarrying) occurring at the time. At the time of my visit, in 2007 they were also designing a group website, to include an introduction to the group and its origins, along with maps, walks and information on the changing countryside since the 1950s. One member was working on this:

“It’s made me do things possibly that I wouldn’t have done otherwise. You know, I wanted to build a website so I, you know, worked on that, developed that, took... digital photographic courses... to improve my photography” (Interview, 2007)

The group had successfully set up its own website by 2011 (see Figure 6.18). So it is now one of the 27 groups with their own website.

Figure 6.18: Charley Heritage Group Website



(Source: Charley Heritage Group Website, 2011)

Interestingly, the topics on the website, such as physical features and natural history, suggest that the group's interests are broadening to include environmental, as well as historical place related, interests in the local area.

The Charley Heritage Group is not directly linked with any other groups in this study. However, it did seem well-connected to other initiatives, including those run by The National Forest and North West Leicestershire Council. Interestingly I was informed that when the group members referred to 'The Forest' they meant Charnwood Forest, rather than The National Forest. The boundaries of the ancient forests of Charnwood and Needwood form the geographical template for the place now known as The National Forest. The group told me that that it had been involved in The National Forest Archives project and it had been good, but the website could no longer be used as the funding for the project had run out and it was only for a fixed time scale. The LANDshapes project linked to both the rural and urban elements of The

National Forest area chronicling tales and images to record the culture and heritage of local people (Parry, 2006) and took place between 2003-2006 (LANDshapes, 2006). While not linked formally to another group, some members go to a nearby Gardening Club. There are also other local historical interest groups close by in neighbouring villages and, there is a 'Friends of' group linked to a nearby old quarry.⁴⁸ The group seems well-integrated into the local community and local life. Members talked about getting their eggs and milk locally from farms in the parish. Other topics discussed at the meeting included big bricks at a local museum, talks about medieval contraception at Tutbury Castle, 'dress-ups' at Belper Museum, neighbouring parishes, and duck, pheasant and hen raising which several members seemed interested in.

Summary - The Charley Heritage Group is a small group focusing on the Parish of Charley. The venues for the group's meetings are not public places but individual volunteer's houses. They highlight that not everyone who moves to the area becomes involved in the local community. The group was founded due to a particular event rather than to do with the place itself but their activities have focused on local heritage. Its focus has also developed into investigating the areas natural heritage, so linking interests between local history and the environment. Other members of the local community have been involved with the group through particular projects. The group gather information on the heritage of Charley thus preserving some of the places historical identity. The volunteers share their research with others through participation in local events, producing resources and their website. Not all the group volunteers originally belong to the local community. They have made a physical contribution to the local village through the installation of two Millennium stones and have produced a Millennium map showing the history of the parish from 1894-2000, which is shown on their website. They are also interested in the place's industrial heritage which involved quarrying.

⁴⁸ Quarry and gardening groups not included in this study

South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group, Gresley, Swadlincote, South Derbyshire

The South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group is one of thirteen historical interest groups based in Derbyshire considered in this study. It is one of 16 groups in the study which focus on a county or part of a county area and one of 12 groups which meet regularly at a particular location. This group is based on an old coalfield area. The earliest reference to Swadlincote's mineral deposits date back to 1294 and in 1795 Sir Nigel Gresley opened a small mine linked to pottery kilns and workshops in the grounds of Gresley Hall, his ancestral home (SDDC, 2012). Collieries within the Swadlincote area formed part of the South Derbyshire coalfield, one of the smallest in the Midlands, which extended southwards into Leicestershire. A number of collieries, brickworks and potteries were established in the area throughout the 19th Century, including:

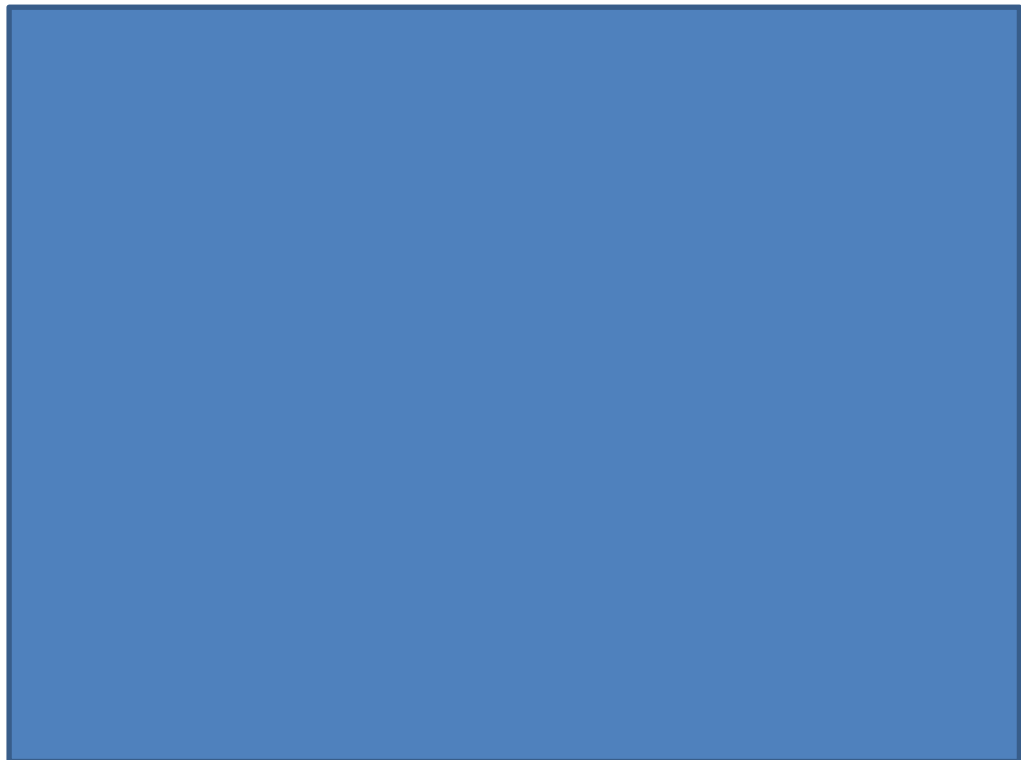
- Granville Colliery sunk in 1823
- Church Gresley (1829)
- Stanton (1854)
- Bretby (1855)
- Gresley Wood (1856)
- Cadley Hill (1861)
- Netherseal (1872)
- Coton Park, and
- Linton Colliery (1875)

(SDDC, 2012)

However, by the late 1960s production had declined and 1988 marked the end of deep coal mining in the district with the closure of with closure of Cadley Hill, the last remaining colliery (SDDC, 2012). As a result of the mining activity Swadlincote was suffering from a shortage of stable building land and was scarred by colliery spoil heaps, clay

holes and other features of industrial dereliction (SDDC, 2012). Gresley Old Hall (see Figure 6.19) is a small country house built in various phases from the 1580s to c.1710. It has in the past been a family home, a tenanted farmhouse and home to an unsuccessful china factory before becoming a Miners' Welfare Centre in the 1950s (Heritage Open Days, 2012).

Figure 6.19: Gresley Old Hall



(Source: Heritage Open Days, 2012)

The South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group started in 1999 as a group who met in a local pub every Thursday evening to talk about mining. Group members also collected various mining memorabilia and eventually the group managed to get space at Gresley Old Hall. The Miners' Welfare group was able to purchase Gresley Old Hall in around 1952 after they took 2p out of each Gresley Pit miners' wages towards it. Since then the group has expanded (Interview, 2008). So the group is now based at Gresley Old Hall, in South Derbyshire, with a room dedicated to mining memorabilia from the South Derbyshire area. It also

has its own computer and video equipment. Over the last three years the group has been involved with over 50 outings to schools, villages, village halls and other groups, such as women's institutes promoting knowledge and understanding of South Derbyshire's mining heritage. The group also takes mining heritage displays to fayres and galas in South Derbyshire and the surrounding areas, such as the Festival of Leisure, Overseal Gala and Measham Festival. It also has schools, other groups and individuals visiting them at Gresley Old Hall in order to learn more about the mining heritage of the area.

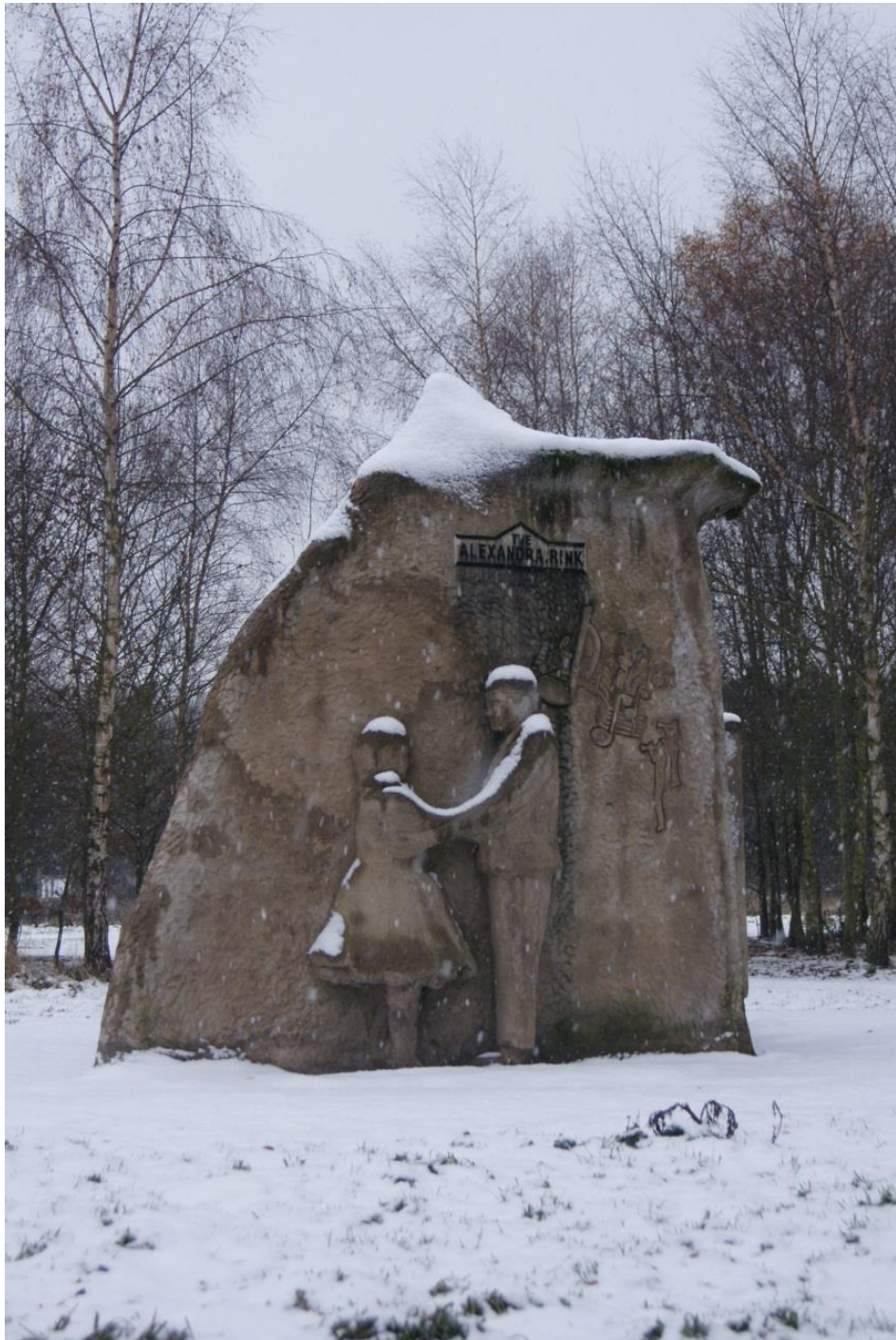
The South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group was involved in the creation of a miners' sculpture which is situated at Rosliston Forestry Centre (see Figures 6.20a and 6.20b)

Figure 6.20a: Miners Sculpture (Cadley Hill Colliery), Rosliston Forestry Centre



(Source: Towns, 2010)

**Figure 6.20b: Miners Sculpture (Dancing at Alexandra Rink),
Rosliston Forestry Centre**

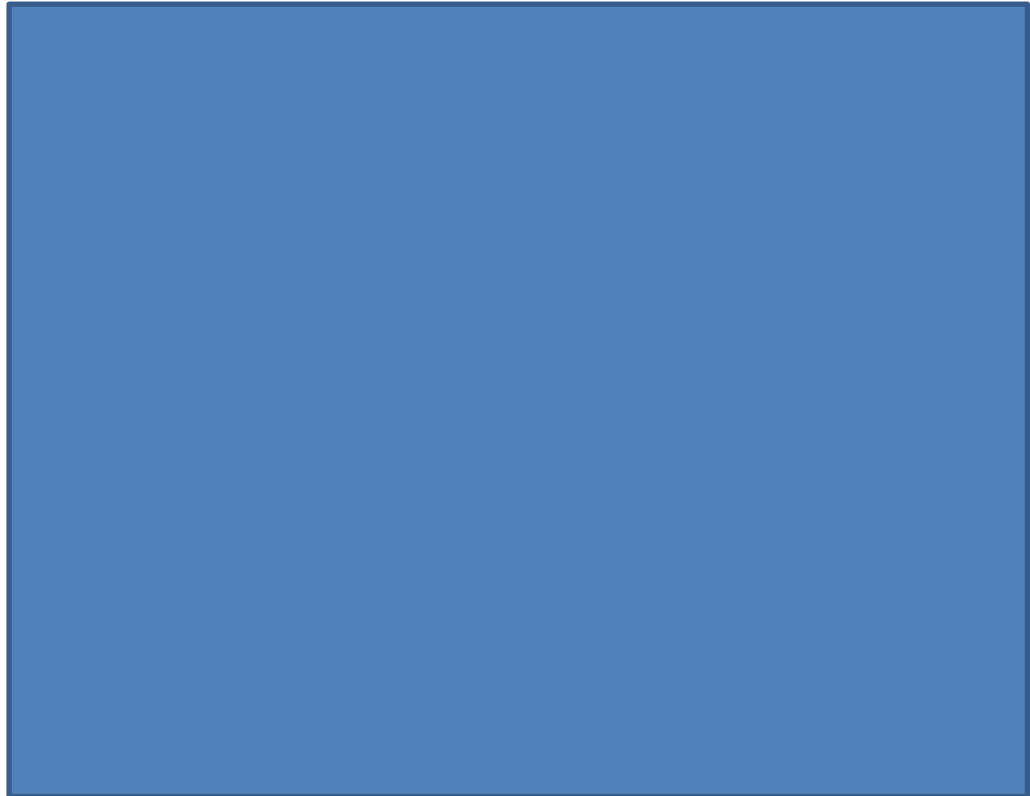


(Source: Towns, 2010)

The Miners Sculpture is made from concrete and reinforced steel, is called 'Underground Overground' (Glo-Design, 2012) and provides a physical memorial of the mining heritage of the area at a site which was

set up as a partnership project with The National Forest. The group is also campaigning for an interpretation board to be installed at old Caldey Pit site (see Figure 6.18) on what is now a Bison Manufacturing (producer of precast concrete products) site.

Figure 6.21: Caldey Hill Colliery



(Source: South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group 2012)

The group meets every Tuesday morning at Gresley Old Hall to work on its South Derbyshire mining heritage displays and for school and other visits, and on the Thursday of each month it has meetings, also at Gresley Old Hall, followed by a social in the bar. Approximately three times a year the group also have a social supper after the meeting. Anyone can come along and join the group (Interview, 2008). Involvement in the group has had a significant effect on the members, many of whom previously had direct involvement in the South Derbyshire mining industry, for example through preserving a historical mining identity and sense of belonging to an area with mining heritage:

“The attitude to life has changed - they’re got a purpose in life again. And to see them with the children is amazing, absolutely awe-inspiring... And as I say the men’s attitude to life is totally different to when the pits first closed. Life was ‘what should we do now’, nobody cared...” (Interview, 2008)

The group has been donated items from local places and local people. For example, when the local miners rescue moved it donated its old equipment. Rawdon Mines Rescue Station is located next to the Conkers National Forest site and is part of the Mines Rescue Service, which has been in operation for over 100 year and offers specialist skills, experience and knowledge to effect the rescue and escape of mineworkers from underground (MRSL, 2013). Snibston Discovery Museum (established in 1992 to showcase Leicestershire’s historic science, technology, design and fashion collections (LCC, 2011) also donated seventeen tonnes of equipment when it emptied its outside compound. At galas and festivals the group is often donated memorabilia rescued from destruction by members of the public. The group is also promoted at the Swadlincote Tourist Information Centre which has a photo of the groups’ facilities (Interview, 2008). The group is hoping to move from its first floor room at Gresley Old Hall to the ground floor once current refurbishment is completed. This will improve accessibility and space for the group. The group was initially resentful of The National Forest however they now see it as a positive development:

“When it first started, The National Forest, and we were fledging historians we were very resentful of it because it was just taking over what should have been ours, but now we have got it covered with the pottery, the Magic Attic, the miners’ group, the history forum, you know we’ve got it covered. Each little village now has its own history group so they’ve got it covered. So the Forest now can invite in outsiders [laughs]” (Interview, 2008)

It appears that this historical interest group and others were concerned about The National Forest 'taking over'. This might be in relation to the development of a new place identity for the area and fears about mining heritage being lost in the process. Indeed, this volunteer suggests that once local historical interest groups felt more established and the heritage of the area had been protected they were happy to become The National Forest and a place for the nation to visit. Alongside coal mining, Swadlincote's other major industry was pottery, which resulted in the local skyline becoming dominated by kilns and chimneys and Swadlincote playing an important historical role in supplying pipes to meet the requirements of Public Health Acts both in this country and the world (SDDC, 2012). Therefore even before the development of The National Forest, it could be said that Swadlincote had national importance, as could be said about mining. Therefore South Derbyshire and Swadlincote can be said to have multiple place identities linking various heritage and recent place developments.

Summary – The South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group is based at Gresley Old Hall, the local miners' welfare building, close to the town of Swadlincote in South Derbyshire and works with individuals and organisations from across South Derbyshire and into the National Forest. The group plays a key role in the preservation of mining heritage in the area and appears to have given ex-miners a purpose, which can be considered as maintaining a sense of belonging and involvement in a place with mining heritage. The group has also helped to maintain the mining heritage, history and related mining place identity of the area alongside the development of The National Forest. The group provides various community involvement opportunities, including providing educational visits, talks and resources on the mining heritage of the area for younger generations and others who have not been brought up with local mining heritage and knowledge. Although at first concerned about the development of the National Forest, it is now supportive. Local people and organisations have been involved in

contributing mining memorabilia to the group, which has thus been rescued from possible destruction. The activities of the group can also be said to be of national importance through their recording of mining heritage.

Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the third objective of this study to investigate place relations and belonging amongst volunteers and groups, including those related to The National Forest. The National Forest was established to be a place both to re-create local landscapes, resulting in local benefits and resources, and to provide a landscape of national importance. The new place identity bestowed on the area and its associated changes are influenced by the intertwined heritage and landscapes of the area. Any new developments and place changes influence the way the area's heritage is protected (or not) and portrayed in the future and the way in which related future landscapes are developed. Such a project and place development might be expected to have a significant impact on those people living or active within the area who have particular interests in the local heritage and environment.

The main the conclusions from the empirical work discussed in this chapter focus on place involvement and belonging. The environmental and historical interest groups take part in activities in various places within and around The National Forest. These groups have a range of associations with particular places, some groups have responsibility for particular places within The National Forest, and others regularly use certain places as meeting points for their groups. Groups are distributed across the counties of Staffordshire, Derbyshire and Leicestershire with a predominance of groups based in Leicestershire. Some groups focus on specific sites in The National Forest, and other groups cover wider areas that include parts of The National Forest but go beyond it. Indeed, although the groups in this study are active within The National Forest many have links to 'outside' places and networks.

Some groups are based in towns but their activities may focus on specific sites (a pumping station) and some include places beyond (surrounding areas and country-wide). Other groups are focused on villages (museum, village history groups), parishes (heritage group) and other specific sites (park, canal). There are also groups with a wider focus, for example covering counties or particular areas of industry (mining). In a place made up of edges (county, rural, urban, industrial and so forth) the groups in this study have associations with various places which make up The National Forest – urban towns, rural villages, industrial heritage sites, parks, nature reserves and reclaimed industrial areas which are now planted with trees and attracting wildlife. These contrasting areas which belong to the mosaic of The National Forest can be considered 'edgelands', as termed by Shoard (2002) including a range of industrial history, including coal mining, as well as rural areas and towns. This sense of belonging within coalfield areas and their places of stark contrasts is highlighted by Crang (1998). Therefore a strong sense of community attachment to these places in terms of historical interests and the mining communities within the area should perhaps not be much of a surprise.

The historical interest groups were predominantly linked to particular sites, areas or other places within the National Forest, for example villages and sites of historical interest. In contrast while the environmental groups often met in particular places their interests tended to be much broader ranging from gathering data on particular species across a county to worldwide species and wildlife interests. Additionally, some of the historical interest groups have sole occupancy of a particular building which often house items of historical interest to the area. This gives them a more permanent sense of belonging to a particular place. In some cases funding has been gained to adapt buildings to become the hubs of historical interest groups in, and focusing on, particular places which may include restoration works. A

number of both the environmental and historical interest groups have held activities at venues shared with other local groups and activities.

As well as non-place specific species interests, some environmental groups are focused on the improvement and conservation of places. However, it can be argued that again interests are not place-specific as the conservations tasks and other environmental activities could be carried out elsewhere and are not necessarily specific to being in those particular places within The National Forest. Indeed, some of the environmental groups carry out activities at different places which change over time. Others have had included a long term responsibility for a particular place, for example maintaining a nature reserve or bird hide. In contrast, the historical interest groups are more likely to focus on community connections in a particular village, town or local industries. Environmental and historical interest groups within The National Forest did not tend to be within mutual overlapping networks. Social network connections consisted of links to other similar interest groups in neighbouring areas, and belonging to shared-interest, social communities further away and with national groups. Some volunteers have developed a particular interest through belonging to a locally based network. This involvement has included socially and geographically placed activities. Place based relations with the area defined by The National Forest sometimes stem from the historical co-evolving of communities and landscapes, with volunteers keen to discover and record information about the heritage of the area. Indeed, as highlighted by Buchecker *et al* (2003) a social and cultural sense of belonging can be lost if there is an absence of connection and co-evolving opportunities with the landscape. In this study this included those without historical family connections to the area finding ways to become socially involved with the place where they now live in through volunteering.

Involvement in the voluntary groups can also break down barriers and create connections between original locals and those who have moved to the area through the development of shared interests, local understanding/knowledge and mutual senses of belonging. Volunteers often emphasised the friendships they have made and social benefits of belonging to the groups. Volunteers also included those returning to the area after a time away. Faced with changes and developments to the place since they left as well as changes to their own perspectives both the individuals and places have moved on during their time apart, as highlighted by Massey (2005). Those returning to the area have used volunteering as a way to reconnect and re-discover and re-work their sense of belonging to places, communities and social groups, bringing in their new perspectives and interests.

The identity of this place which was designated as The National Forest over twenty years ago, can be considered both in terms of being for the people who may be considered 'within' or 'part of' it and in relation to connections between The National Forest and places outside it. Massey (1996) has highlighted that we can only understand senses of place through linking to other places beyond and The National Forest is not only about providing a renewed place for local people but is promoted as a resource for the nation. Volunteers highlighted that the changes to the area since the idea of The National Forest came about, including landscape improvements, and increased recreational and business opportunities, have proved beneficial for local residents, visitors, and for wildlife. These developments are seen by environmental and historical interest group volunteers in this study as improvements for future generations as well as a way of re-developing a sense of community and place, which was lost to some extent when local mining industries disappeared.

Interestingly group interests are concerned both with the preservation of features and knowledge of past industries and landscapes as well as the improvement of the local landscapes, environments and place

features. Group volunteers also recognise the landscape changes which have occurred since the formation of The National Forest, including restoring woodland to previously industrial areas, and highlight these as local improvements. Awareness is shown amongst the volunteers that the landscape of the area is very much made up of both natural and manmade features and the importance of being aware of and acknowledging the history of the area, particularly when planning and making changes to places. The environmental improvements and business opportunities due to The National Forest are welcomed, but an important finding is that only a few of the groups have been directly involved with The National Forest organisation and these changes.

During this study, it has also become apparent that there are some different personal views amongst environmental and historical interest volunteers on The National Forest and the development of this new place-identity has not gone uncontested. For some volunteers, The National Forest is still seen as something separate to them, unrelated to what their group is doing, and for others it is just a way of marketing the area to attract tourists. Indeed there are some concerns about how much awareness The National Forest organisation has of voluntary groups in the area and what they have achieved and contributed. In some cases there are worries about volunteers being taken advantage of if they have direct involvement with The National Forest. For other volunteers The National Forest has provided a new focus, a new purpose, improved places and provided greater meaning for their activities. For example, landscape improvements have provided more opportunities to see wildlife and be involved in landscape change such as tree planting, as well as volunteers feeling like they belong to something bigger (The National Forest project) than just the group they volunteer for.

Part of the groups' activities in, and belonging to places within The National Forest have included the groups' impact on local places. For example, some groups have been involved in physically changing the

local 'environment' through the installation of key features or restoration and preservation of natural and built places. As well as having a physical impact on places, groups have created facilities and services for the wider local community and general public. This has included places where volunteers can take part in shared interests and activities and places where other members of the community can contribute to and access information and facilities.

The case studies in this chapter highlight how aspects of place belonging can be considered through specific individual examples. The Claymills Pumping Engine Trust is an example of one of the few groups who had a strong sense of belonging to The National Forest despite the work of the group focusing on one very specific heritage site. Being on the edge of Staffordshire with concerns expressed regarding the county council's interest in local heritage, there does not appear to be a strong sense of place belonging to the county. However, The National Forest promotes and supports heritage and is a place this county edge-land group feel more comfortable expressing that they belong to. The group feel like their work is important as otherwise this heritage site would not have been preserved.

The Friends of Rosliston Wood is a group that was actually set up due to the development of The National Forest. The volunteers for this group have been involved in creating and managing new woodland which belongs to, and makes up a part of the woodland created to be, The National Forest. Woodland created by the group also belongs to Rosliston Forestry Centre and group representatives belong to the Rosliston Forestry Centre Community Liaison Group. Therefore volunteers feel a sense of belonging and ownership both in terms of the new woodland and The National Forest as a national resource.

The Charley Heritage Group volunteers are very much focused on belonging to the local parish rather than feeling strong connection to The National Forest. They feel a stronger attraction and sense of

belong to the ancient Forest of Charnwood. Charnwood is not a mining community but is an area of rural farming and group members are active in this community. The group's purpose is to preserve the identity of Charley both through preserving and sharing its history as well as contributing to its rural community.

In contrast, the South Derbyshire Mining Preservation Group is focused on the mining history of the area and has helped local people with the transition from belonging to a mining community to now belonging to The National Forest. The group also belong to Gresley Old Hall, where they meet and house their memorabilia and have a presence at Rosliston Forestry Centre where a sculpture dedicated the miners is situated. The group was set up before The National Forest and initially had concerns about belonging regarding The National Forest organisation taking over of their history however they now feel they have their history 'covered' and are happy to belong and share the history with visitors to The National Forest. The group maintains links to the heritage of the area and mining heritage whilst also providing a resource for the place now and in the future.

There is little doubt that The National Forest has had an effect on the local environment and history of the area despite some mixed feelings and experiences of volunteers and their groups. In conclusion, a quote by Interviewee 10 suggests that while The National Forest has yet to become fully established its inevitable inclusion as part of local history will help facilitate this:

"I suppose eventually it will become a part of the local history, won't it"
(Interview, 10, 2005: Male, Historical Interest Group Founder)

The National Forest is now over twenty years old and so for new and younger generations it will have always existed in their lifetimes and it is likely they will have different feelings towards it. Additionally the history of The National Forest is being told to those who visit children's

education centres in The National Forest, such as Rosliston Forestry Centre and Conkers Discovery Centre. This comment can also be considered in relation to the production of place-meanings and the way places can be shaped by the people who belong to those places and the communities and social groups who make up part of those places. As younger generations grow up with and experience The National Forest they may develop a greater sense of belonging to this place and the new National Forest is likely to become more established and embedded in the local area and community.

Belonging to groups has created opportunities for volunteers to increase their knowledge of local history and environments. It can be argued that this may increase volunteers' understanding of and senses of belonging to the area and local places as they co-evolve with the places physical and social changes. As discussed by Massey (2005: 95) spaces are 'always ongoing' and 'the product of social relations'. Therefore, it can be said that the volunteers themselves are changing places and are a part of those places. In the case of historical interest groups and volunteers, it appears that such connections with local places and practise based communities can help to re-establish a sense of rootedness and connection to local places. These historical connections are often linked to past local industries. Crouch (2010) highlights that there is an uncertainty of belonging as changes occur and we negotiate who we feel we are. As the places we belong to change and move on and new generations become a part of those places, belonging will change and develop. There now follows a concluding chapter which considers the empirical findings of this study in light of the literature discussed earlier and the major contributions of the thesis to knowledge.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

The overall aim of this research was to investigate the nature of environmental and local historical interest groups, the volunteers who are involved with these groups and their senses of belonging and relationships with place, focusing on the specific area of The National Forest. This place was chosen as the focus for the study partially due to it being an interesting 'edge-land' area, as defined by Shoard (2002), including rural and urban places, old mining areas and several towns. The National Forest area is made up of a mosaic of these different places and parts of three different counties, including areas of agriculture and locations with a strong industrial past. After the decline of the mining and potteries industries the area was left in a state of decline and this was one of the reasons it was chosen to become The National Forest. Therefore this thesis has relevance to both urban and rural geographies.

The National Forest was an ideal framework for considering concepts of place and belonging. It was identified and defined as a place through a Countryside Commission government initiative (Cloke *et al*, 1996). Named and located in 1990, The National Forest is a relatively new place designation however it is made up of places and communities that were in existence before the idea of The National Forest came about. The National Forest has brought a new place identity to the area and resulted in various significant landscape changes, including tree planting and the restoration of old industrial areas, thus having an effect on the history and environment of the area. Local history and environmental groups, their volunteers, their senses of belonging and relationships with place are of particular interest in relation to the designation of The National Forest as they are involved in the recording, preserving and development of local history and the environment.

The methodology for this research was chosen in order to develop an in-depth understanding of the various environmental and historical interest groups and their volunteers in The National Forest and their relationships with place. A website survey was carried out on the groups along with participant observations and one to one interviews in order to investigate group organisation, composition, origins and activities. Information on particular volunteers was gathered through the volunteer interviews with the purpose of examining personal motivations and experiences including individual views and opinions. Using a combination of group and individual research, place relations and belonging were investigated.

There are three main conclusions to this thesis. Firstly The National Forest was not as significant to volunteer's sense of belonging as expected. Secondly there is a greater focus on local places and place cultures amongst the local history groups than the environmental groups, with a stronger focus on mutual interests and places as habitats amongst environmental groups. Thirdly participants in the study found that volunteering for the groups helped them develop senses of place and belonging. These conclusions will now be discussed in further detail in the section below on contributions to knowledge.

Contributions to Knowledge

Firstly, although The National Forest is seen as a significant, and generally positive, development for the area the majority of the groups and volunteers feel a stronger sense of belonging to the places and areas that their groups already focus on rather than in relation to The National Forest. Half of the groups considered in this study were formed before the area was designated as The National Forest and half were formed afterwards. This indicates a long tradition of environmental and historical interests in the area. The formation of only a small number of groups was related to the designation of The National Forest. This and other empirical evidence suggests that The National Forest as a whole

does not mean as much to volunteers and their activities as was expected. The National Forest has also provided new recreational opportunities and new and restored woodlands. Environmental groups and volunteers involved in recording species changes in the area, planting and conservation activities generally did not have strong feelings of belonging either to The National Forest or the other places within it where they were active. However, interests in the local history and communities located within The National Forest does show motivations to preserve a sense of belonging to places within The National Forest.

Although the development of The National Forest as the name and identity for this place has not been completely uncontested it is generally seen by the volunteers studied as having generated improvements to the landscape and recreational resources, with some volunteers keen to suggest further possibilities for development. However, there are some concerns about whether The National Forest organisation is fully aware of the voluntary groups and all their local actions, influences, activities and achievements. This fits the idea that being called The *National* Forest, it has more of a *national* focus whilst the volunteer groups based within it are more focused on local cultures, industries and environments, and less on the National Forest developments and related environmental change.

Some groups are worried that they might be taken advantage of and there is some lack of understanding about how and why The National Forest organisation is developing the area. As groups had generally formed locally without any involvement with The National Forest organisation, this suggests that their main focus is more local rather than national, which could be argued to be working against the idea of The 'National Forest'. In terms of place relations this can also be said to show some lack of understanding of the wider 'National Forest' place developments amongst those focused on particular places within and beyond The National Forest. Large scale transformations can affect

relationships with places and result in territorial feelings and conflicts (Bonaiuto *et al*, 2002). Indeed for some volunteers, The National Forest is still seen as something that is being done within the area, and relatively unrelated to their environmental and historical interest group activities. However, being a part of The National Forest has also helped some volunteers and groups realise their wider significance.

Secondly, there is a greater focus on belonging in relation to physical places and local place cultures amongst historical interest groups and their volunteers. For environmental groups, volunteers' senses of belonging are associated with mutual interest groups and places which are habitats for particular species. Therefore the environmental groups can be said to have an absence of active participation in place, rather their senses of belonging emerge instead through mutual interests and 'doing' activities in particular types of spaces. So in contrast to other studies, for example Gooch (2003) and Lawrence (2009), this study found that place is less important to environmental groups. This may be due to many of the volunteers in this study having more of a focus on specific species. Local places and connections were a particular focus of the historical interest groups' activities and celebrations. Historical interest volunteers felt they belonged to places either through their residency or family 'kinship' connections. Despite this there has been interest in the historical groups and their activities from visitors to the area. There are also strong interests in preserving and sharing information on traditional local cultures, old industries and other features which add to local distinctiveness amongst historical interest groups. Other previous place designations were also significant to some volunteers, for example the ancient forest of Charnwood.

Most of the environmental interest groups in this study do not focus solely on particular local places. For example, some environmental groups and volunteers visit other areas and take part in conservations tasks in various different and changing places. Environmental groups saw the habitats within The National Forest as beneficial but their

interests were generally broader, focusing on environmental improvements, habitats and species in a more general sense or other previous place designations rather than defined by the area of The National Forest. Therefore in terms of place belonging, it is suggested that their focus is particular types of spaces rather than specific places. For environmental group volunteers there was a greater focus on having a sense of belonging to social groups and networks with shared interests. Groups with a more general species interest, such as in bats or birds have a less significant relationship with local places and could carry out their recording activities anywhere as long as the species were present. Therefore for these groups relationships with place can be considered less important. There is not so much emphasis on local significance among these groups, for example places may be of interest because they are a particular habitat or a site where particular wildlife can be found. This concurs with suggestions by Lawrence (2010) that some volunteers are predominantly driven by a sense of attachment to the species in which they are interested.

The groups in this study meet at, and are associated with place on various different scales covering a variety of local sites, counties of The National Forest, and beyond. However despite a range in coverage, the majority of the groups in this study have a base in a particular town or village associated with, or belonging to, a particular community or site. For example, a number of the historical interest groups are associated with specific buildings of significant local heritage importance and some of the environmental interest groups are associated with specific local nature reserves. These places were very diverse, for example ranging from machine rooms and museums to parks and counties. So in this study, as discussed in the study by Mayers (2010), lay discourses and practises are contributing to the wider culture and constructions of place. Indeed, it has been said that place is about social groups and their production of the meaning of place rather than just the physical place (Cresswell, 2004). Therefore volunteering can be considered as a means of understanding and constructing place.

Places and volunteers' relationships with places in this study are about the connections between physical locations, and social groups. However social groups, boundaries and networks are not necessarily focused on a single sense of place, particular spaces or times (Massey, 1996). In terms of belonging to places, communities and areas of interest voluntary groups have overlapping boundaries, both in terms of physical and social space. For example, there are several groups which belong to the area of Derbyshire but they all have different interests and a different focus, with the areas they cover including both places inside and outside of The National Forest. Other groups have overlapping social connections, for example some museum groups belong to the same networks and some environmental volunteers belong to several different environmental groups. This study also includes groups who work on wider scales, for example across counties or as sub-groups of national organisations.

Thirdly, participation in local historical and environmental interest groups includes both volunteers who already have pre-existing connections and a sense of belonging to particular localities or interests and those who have become involved in order to develop a sense of belonging. A significant number of the volunteers were local or had local connections to the places they were involved in, with some incomers having become involved in the groups so that they could become more active and gain a sense of belonging in the local community. Family connections, rural and other environmental experiences, contributed to volunteers having particular local knowledge and place connections.

Motivations for volunteering were multiple, changing and complex often including both intrinsic and altruistic motivations and were often linked to hobby and leisure interests. This included contributing to local community facilities and features as well as personal development opportunities. The volunteers can be said to belong to various volunteer

types, as discussed by Rochester *et al* (2010) and include examples which can be considered as serious leisure volunteers and volunteers with both intrinsic and altruistic motivations. Sometimes involvement in volunteering began when participants had an increase in spare time allowing them to take up a new local activity. Volunteers felt they benefitted personally from their activities, through mental, physical and social benefits as well as developing local place understandings and relationships.

Belonging to place through continuity is important for many volunteers and groups however more significant for historical interest groups than sustained relations with The National Forest is saving culture and traditions of local places. Some, who see themselves as part of traditional working class marginalised communities, are trying to conserve local culture or occupational identity from being lost. However, this is not typically in the sense of being inward looking, with volunteers actively sharing their histories and encouraging interest amongst younger generations. It is suggested in the literature that such communities, where there has been a sense of loss and decline, focus on what has been lost and have longings for community moving forward (Delanty, 2010) and that volunteering can provide a means for integration and identification (Buchecker *et al*, 2003). In support of this some volunteers highlighted that historical volunteering has given them and their communities a new focus and purpose following the closure of the mines.

Additionally, in terms of longevity and focus, groups in the area have come and gone over time, usually associated with wider societal developments such as industrial archaeology and environmentalism, indicating that there is some fragility amongst such interest groups. In some cases this is linked to concerns about ageing volunteers, with thriving groups more likely to be involving and promoting their activities to younger generations. Groups tend to be structured in their set up, which helps them gaining funding, however not all members are active

participants or equally committed to the groups and not all participants are members. Although the majority of the groups are made up of enthusiastic, amateur volunteers, some groups are directly involved with professionals and some have volunteers whose amateur involvement has led to related careers and semi-professional activities. Some groups are also reluctant to become involved with professionals and professional organisations due to suspicions about them taking advantage of the groups' knowledge, resources and data. However, most groups are keen to share their work with the general public through publications, website, activities, events and access to their facilities.

This study makes a contribution to the wider research on community and place belonging in relation to current voluntary groups and trends in environmental and historical interests. No other study has concentrated on the historical and environmental volunteers in The National Forest and the ways which their stories are intertwined with local place identities. Key empirical findings in this study add to the understanding and conceptualisation of place and place belonging and suggest some reworking of ideas. Firstly the concept of 'place' needs differentiation in terms of created places (The National Forest) and existing places. Secondly, it needs to be considered that ideas of place vary with different types of volunteering interest – in this study historical and environmental volunteering can be considered in terms of specific places versus spaces of more generic interests. The idea that place is less important to environmental volunteers is a new departure. Dimensions of place can therefore be considered further in terms of voluntary activities focusing on places and activities taking part in places.

Finally, this study also highlights the ways in which physical and social places are altered through belonging. Volunteering has a material impact on places, for example through the preservation of newspapers, buildings and habitats. Historical interest groups are involved in

collecting and verifying data across different fields of interest and parishes. Data from environmental volunteers contributes to wider, national data on species and the environment, whereas historical interest voluntary groups bring the focus back to local changes and significance. Additionally, it is the local voluntary groups which have a greater impact on senses of place and belonging, despite the designation of the area as The National Forest. This suggests that place belonging can be considered in terms of personal belonging and the wider impact and significance of personal actions and presentation of local places and place data. This leads back to questions about why there is less focus on particular places amongst the environmental interest groups in The National Forest. Is it because The National Forest is not currently considered an iconic place? This question leads onto suggestions for further research.

Further Research

The above insights have the potential for framing of further investigations concerning relationships with places and spaces and volunteers' senses of belonging to particular places and shared interest groups. The findings in relation to environmental volunteers who were in The National Forest having less of a sense of belonging to specific places could be examined further in more iconic places such as the Peak District or Lake District.

Future research on local historical volunteer data recorders could be carried out in terms of their citizen science contributions to wider national bodies on local historical information, for example the Victoria County Histories. This could then be compared to research on data gathered by environmental volunteers from this perspective, for example volunteer data gathered for national phenology records. This could include data gathering by both groups and individuals and uploaded to websites and checked by professionals.

Another suggestion for possible future research following on from this study is to investigate the relationships between outsiders and tourists visiting The National Forest, and local residents in The National Forest, including their various views on its place and understanding of local places within The National Forest. Such research could focus on particular sites of interest within The National Forest, such as The National Memorial Arboretum. The research could be extended to investigate other volunteer groups in The National Forest area and their roles, responsibilities and influences in relation to the idea of the 'Big Society' and their contributions to local places and communities.

In the future, it may well be that a stronger sense of belonging to The National Forest as a whole develops and there will be a time when no-one can remember a time prior to The National Forest being in existence. Therefore, it would be also interesting to look at the lasting physical and social impacts of the groups on places, and at generational change and how views and feelings of belonging to The National Forest develop and change with generations and education on The National Forest.

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Appendix

Semi-structured Interview Questions

You

- How did your environmental/history interests first begin?
- What were some of your first experiences with the countryside/local history?
- Has your involvement changed?
- Are you family and friends involved in your interests in any way?
- What do you do at the sites of interest you visit?
- Why do you think the environment/history is important?
- What sort of relationship do you consider yourself to have with the local environment?
- How do you feel after you have been actively involved in an activity?
- Do you feel like you have experienced any social, mental or physical benefits from your involvement?
- Do you think you have benefited from your experience/knowledge/learning?
- In what ways would you like to see your skills and knowledge passed on?
- Do you have any specific local connections to the area?
- What specific interest groups are you involved in?
- How long have you been involved with the group(s)?

The Group

- How long has the group been going?
- How many people are in the group?
- When and where does the group meet?
- How does the group promote itself?

- Do you have any leaflets or information about the group?
- What does the group do?
- What sorts of talks/field visits does the group do?
- Does the group get involved in any forms of interpretation or arts?
- What area does your group cover and in what way?
- Do you/the group produce any publications?
- Do you/the group have any influences on policies?
- What kind of people, join the group (age, gender, social/ethnic groups etc)?
- Is the group linked with any other groups in any way?
- In what way are these other groups different?
- Do you think there are any limitations to whom can get involved?
- Are there any particular positions that people take within the group?
- How long do people tend to stay with the group and why?
- How has the group changed over time?
- Why do you think the group has changed?
- Does the group hold any separate social events?
- Is the group associated with any specific sites/places of interest?
- Is the group involved with local tourism in anyway?
- What effects has the group had on the local landscape and history and vice versa?
- What do you think is the way forward for the group?

The National Forest

- How and when did you first hear about the National Forest?

- What do you think about the National Forest?
- How has the formation of the National Forest affected the group?
- Has membership of the group changed since the formation of the National Forest and if yes in what way?
- In what ways is the group involved with the National Forest?
- How did this involvement occur?
- Have you been to Conkers/what do you think?
- In what way would you like to see the National Forest developed?