



Forum Dispatch

Inform, debate, represent



Newsletter 6
Spring 2011

The newsletter of the Diggers' Forum

Chair's introduction

Chiz Harward

After six years in the hotseat Chris Clarke has stood down as Chair of the DF, Jez Taylor is also stepping down from the role of Treasurer,

Chris and Jez were instrumental in setting up the DF back in 2004 and between them they have done a huge amount to make it a viable organisation. IfA rules mean they must step down after 6 years on committee, and its time to let them both enjoy a well-deserved rest. On behalf of us all I'd like to thank both of them for the immense amount of work they have both put into the DF. Both Jez and Chris will be keeping in touch with the ongoing committee and making sure we keep their vision on track

We've decided that for the foreseeable future the Chair of the DF will rotate between the committee members. This shouldn't make any difference to you, the member, but is more in line with the egalitarian ethos of the DF and should spread the load amongst committee members. Speaking of which, if anyone is interested in joining the committee then do get in touch.

Of course the DF isn't just the committee. If we are really going to make positive changes to professional archaeology then we must all get involved and do our bit. We can't just leave it to someone else to do the hard work for us. If enough of us work together then it doesn't have to feel like hard work, although there's no guarantees it will be fun.

So what can you do? Some of you have already helped by filling out our recent survey on travel and away work and so giving us hard data to tackle this subject; others have offered to help by pinning up flyers in site huts; all of you can give us the heads up on any good or bad practice out in the field - we're especially interested in any employers paying sub-IfA rates or potentially bogus self-employment.

Southport Group draft report

In addition we need to get your views on important changes to IfA subscription rates and how the IfA works. Perhaps more importantly we also need your feedback on the **Southport Group draft report**. The report is concerned with planning-led investigations into the Historic Environment and outlines a 'vision' for a post-PPG16 world. It is billed as a rare opportunity to reshape historic environment practice which includes the archaeological profession. Well we all know that where we are now is not where we want to be, but members have raised serious concerns over the report's recommendations.

In this issue we've printed a response from the Southport Group to our main concerns and outlined our initial position to the draft. We need **YOU** to tell us what you think as soon as possible so we can make sure that the Southport vision for the future of archaeology includes the views of field workers. Read all about it inside....

Its quite simple. If you don't say what you are thinking *out-loud* then *no-one* can listen to you.



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Are your details up to date? We want to make sure you get this newsletter and other DF communications, so please let the IfA know if you change your postal or email address at:

groups@archaeologists.net

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Diggers' Forum mission statement

The Diggers' Forum (DF) is committed to creating a positive, sustainable and financially viable career for all professional archaeologists at all points in their career. The DF is a Special Interest Group of the Institute for Archaeologists representing all archaeologists working out on site at whatever grade. Membership of the DF is open to all.

The DF was formed in 2004 to represent the views, aspirations and professional requirements of its members, in addition to campaigning for improvements in pay and conditions within the profession.

The views of those new to a career in archaeology, or who are employed at the lower rungs of the job, are under-represented in the industry. It is a key aim of the Diggers' Forum to redress this balance and keep the issues and welfare of its membership at the top of the IfA agenda and publicised to the world beyond.

The Diggers' Forum will serve as a platform to provide up to date news and information to its members, as well as actively encouraging debate and involvement within the DF and the IfA on the developing roles required of field-staff now and in the decades to come.

Join us in the Diggers' Forum and help make a positive difference to our profession: <http://www.archaeologists.net/groups/diggers>



Letter from the editor

Chiz Harward

Members receiving this newsletter will immediately notice that it has been sent out as a pdf e-newsletter via email, rather than a paper copy like the printed Issue 5 that dropped on your doormats back in February. On one level, the reason is simple, its down to the cost: to send out four paper newsletters a year would completely blow all our budget on the printing costs, envelopes and postage.

At the DF we feel that a regular quarterly newsletter is the best way of keeping in touch with you. It is the perfect vehicle to get information across to a geographically disparate membership who can't easily attend conferences, dayschools or AGMs.

It's an ideal medium with which to communicate what's been going on, and to give you news, resources and articles. It also provides a medium for members to contribute their own ideas, photos, opinions or articles. Hopefully the newsletter can act to bind the membership together, creating a 'buzz' and an identity for the DF and a shopwindow of what we and our members are doing.

Personally I would like to read a newsletter that is vibrant and positive, delivers relevant news and information, interesting and informative articles and gets out regularly and on time! We'd like to give you an established format with regular slots and series of articles on a quarterly basis to keep you up to date with the changing archaeological world.

This e-newsletter is a clear and simple alternative to printed copy that costs nothing but time to produce and can be sent out the second it is finished-you may have noticed that some articles in Issue 5 were out of date before it was printed, we want to avoid that happening again! As you will see with the Southport Group pages this isn't a problem anymore. With an e-newsletter each issue can be as large or small as we like, it can be in full colour, we can bring out extra bonus issues when we need (we are planning a pre-IfA council election issue interviewing all candidates). We can include live hyperlinks to other websites and documents so the newsletter becomes a gateway to wider resources. Perhaps most importantly it releases a relatively large amount of potential

revenue to use for other positive activities that cost money in cash terms -such as holding outreach events or providing bursaries for AGMs and conferences.

An e-newsletter can be read by members wherever they have email, so in some ways it gets out to members better than by post, especially if you are working away, but please do print out a copy and stick it up on the noticeboard or in your site hut. We *are* continuing with a far smaller print run that we are sending out to employers to put up on noticeboards, and a 'sampler' of each newsletter will be available online to give non-members an idea of what they are missing.

Too much text? Not enough pictures? Then send in your photographs of Digger life. We want to include lots of photos in each newsletter, so please send us hi-res images with permission of the copyright holder.

I hope you like your new newsletter!



photograph © MoLA

If you would like to contribute to the Diggers' Forum Newsletter, or have a suggestion on a subject we should cover, please contact the editor by email: chiz@urban-archaeology.com

Dates for the diary and details of events or news should be sent to Gwilym Williams by email: gwilymwilliams70@yahoo.co.uk



DF roundup

candidates!!

DF members have continued to sit on a variety of **IfA committees** as well as being selected to sit on a **Disciplinary Panel**. DF involvement with new IfA

2011 got off with a bit of a bang *and* a whimper, Issue 5 -which had been 99% complete since mid December- finally got out to members in mid February due to delays caused by sickness, email issues, and sky-high printing costs. The cost of printing is such that we have moved over to an e-newsletter (see Letter from the editor). We had hoped for a synchronised launch of the newsletter with the DF away work and travel survey but the survey ended up going out on its own. Response was fairly good with a lively debate over on BAJR around the issues: we are now starting to crunch the data and will be publishing a report soon - hopefully in time for the next newsletter. **You** will hear about the results first, then the report will be presented to the IfA and to FAME -the employers organisation. We'll be coming up with clear and achievable guidelines that can make commercial archaeology a better place for us all to work.

We now have **over 360 members**, which makes us one of the largest Special Interest Groups of the IfA, the more members we have the louder our -and YOUR- voice, both within the IfA and in the wider profession. That is why we care about the numbers! We are hoping to get over 400 members by the end of the year so if you aren't a member please join, and if you are, then ask your colleagues.

Following our response to the freezing of IfA minima the issue was discussed in Council and Council Chair Gerry Wait has written to FAME and Prospect calling for renewed talks on this issue. Decisions over any increases to the minima will next be discussed in November, after Council elections...

Following the co-option of Chiz Harward we now have four members on the **IfA Council**. This is still down on our previous levels, and we ask anyone who shares our values and is considering standing for council to get in touch so we can add our support. We are planning a pre-election e-newsletter special, we'll be asking **all** the candidates for their views on a range of issues that affect field archaeologists, **YOU** can then decide who you want to give your support to. No more excuses about not knowing about any of the



photograph © Dave Webb

draft **Self-employment Guidelines** has continued and we will be working with IfA staff towards an article for The Archaeologist. We'll be working hard to make sure that the new guidelines are robust without removing the flexibility that freelancers require, whilst ensuring that the potential exploitation of freelancers and bogus self-employment is clearly outlawed.

We've continued checking each issue of the **IfA Jobs Information Service** and the **BAJR** website for job adverts which appear to pay below IfA minima or equivalent freelance rates. We successfully challenged several jobs and trainee positions and will continue to argue for pro-active checking of jobs before they are accepted. The IfA are looking at improvements to the format of the JIS, taking on board many of our comments (http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/node-files/groups_diggers_statement.pdf), and we hope to see real progress on this soon. If you hear of a job that pays below the IfA rates then let us know and we'll see if there is anything we can do about it.

Jeze Taylor has been elected onto the Council of **Rescue -the British Archaeological Trust**, and we hope that this will mark a closer working relationship between our two groups.



Pay packet and other news

Back in Issue 5 we reported on the continued freezing of the IfA minima, as well as the publishing of the new **Recommended Starting Salaries**. Over at **BAJR** David Connolly has since announced a **2% increase** to his BAJR pay grades, the rise goes some way to addressing the effect of inflation (now 4.5%) on wages, although wages are clearly still falling in real terms, especially due to increased food and fuel costs. The fragile economic situation meant David didn't feel he could propose a higher increase, but he did see the real need for some increase, however small. Interestingly when BAJR surveyed employers only three employers objected to the 2% rise, I hope that doesn't mean they aren't intending to hire any new staff.

Quite how a council or university unit facing cuts and pay freezes will manage to award the 2% pay rise to staff old or new is a moot point, now is not an easy time to re-grade staff either, the traditional option for getting around pay scale issues. But I guess that will be left for 'the market' to sort out and there are unfortunately fewer and fewer such employers as the cuts kick in and units close.

JIS notwithstanding, BAJR continues to be the main formal venue to advertise for site staff, especially at short notice (are there ever any archaeology jobs in the Thursday Guardian any more?) and BAJR grades *do* help prevent archaeological wages from sliding back any further. 2% is better than nothing, but its still **negative** in real terms and until wages rise to the point where diggers won't work for the bad payers there is little choice for us out there, and employers paying better wages continue to be at a disadvantage to those who pay badly.

Advertising success?

On a related note BAJR also plans to adapt their advertising scheme to reflect the kind of benefits highlighted in the **DF away survey**: **accommodation, travel pay and subs**. This is

a very welcome move and will allow Diggers to see the **true full value** of any employment and see who not only pays the best, but also gives the best benefits. Employers have been slow to realise that if they have good terms and conditions they should shout about them.

Better employers get better staff, and keep them.



photograph © Dave Webb

Freelance rates

The DF will be producing an article on freelancing later in the year and we will hopefully be able to set out clear advice on freelancing and setting day rates. The IfA published an article in The Archaeologist several years ago with a detailed breakdown of costs for specialists and the resultant day rate needed to make a decent return, we'll be aiming to do the same for field staff.

BAJR have published a series of 'reasonable' **day rates** for various grades of freelance staff, these range from c.£110-130 a day for 'Digging Staff' to c.£150-180 a day for experienced Supervisor/Project Officer. Specialists should consider a rate of c.£200-250 a day. These day rates do give a good rule of thumb for new freelancers -anything under these rates and you will probably not be making any more money than an employee despite the extra risks and work involved in freelancing.

Our basic advice though is to work out your own costs and determine from those the day rate which will give you a viable income, not the other way round!



Consultation on changes to IfA Governance structure

Sadie Watson

If you have visited the IfA website recently you may have noticed a news item about proposed changes to governance, and a request for your opinion (<http://www.archaeologists.net/news/110412-consultation-members-possible-changes-governance>).

The background to this is primarily concerned with allowing more representation of members on Council and allowing the business (or financial) side of Council work to be done by another body, similar to the current Executive Committee (EC). Current Council has debated this long and hard over several meetings, including two Extraordinary meetings and has fleshed out the basic structure of the proposed two groups.

As a Council member and a DF rep, I support the idea of a more representative Council body that would contain reps from each of the Special Interest Groups and Local Groups, as well as elected reps from the wider membership. I also see the use in reducing the amount of financial and budgetary work the Council would do, to allow it to be more strategic- which includes setting pay minima! The new Council would be freed up to discuss professional issues and set our agenda for the future. The 'other body'- currently the EC, would also hold a majority of elected positions to maintain its democracy and allow members to decide who should sit on both bodies.

But that's just my opinion- what do you think? If you don't send in your comments then you don't get your say in how the IfA of the future will look...Imagine a Council of 40 DF members. Then we could change things...

Expansion...

News of the shifting sands of commercial archaeology continue, hot on the heels of Headland Archaeology's [new Leighton Buzzard](#)

[office](#), Cotswold Archaeology have announced they will be setting up a [new South Midlands office](#) headed by Roland Smith -fresh from Wessex Archaeology, who of course have had a new office in [Sheffield](#) for a year.

...and contraction

Meanwhile Oxford Archaeology have confirmed rumours that they are in the final phase of talks to pass their loss-making French divisions to the existing French management team. In a news release put out on their [French website](#) (*but not on OA's British website*) they have announced that the French division, which has been a separate legal entity since earlier this year, will separate completely from OA. Apparently it may also change its name in the future. We wait to hear where this leaves all the staff involved.

Sadly, Exeter City Council has announced that it's City Archaeology Unit [will be wound down](#), the unit was founded in 1970 and rewrote Exeter's history through a series of excavations.



[Rescue](#) has also reported wide-scale cuts to curators at the [Museum of London](#). Shockingly, Rescue reports that: ‘

This leaves the museum without any curatorial experience on Pre-Medieval artefacts; the museum holds one of the most significant collections nationally for these periods. This situation also represents a significant loss of in-house regional expertise.’

At the request of the IfA London Group Pete Hinton, Chief Exec of the IfA, has written to Jack Lohman, Director of MoL, concerning the plans.

Merseyside HER closes

Sad news and a possible taste of things to come from the former Merseyside Archaeological Service and their [Merseyside HER](#). The service has been [shut down](#) and although their website says that 'Historic Environment Records (HERs) are key to the management, research and promotion of the historic environment' it then goes on to state:

'From 1 April 2011 there is no access to the Merseyside Historic Environment Record.'

This is due to withdrawal of funding from all of the five local authorities that had funded the service for the past 20 years. So that's that then.

Wanted: book reviewers

We want to hear from you if you are interested in writing a review article on a recent publication of a site that you worked on. This could be a major monograph or a small journal article on a site that meant a lot to you as an individual or as an archaeologist.

We would like to run articles that not only review the book but also give an insight into the excavation from the Diggers' perspective -who worked there, what you all got up to, how major discoveries were made, an alternative view of the excavation.

If you are interested then get in touch, we may even be able to get you a free review copy of the book!

Web-peril

A word of warning -mind what you put up on Facebook or Twitter or email to your mates. We know of at least one case where a Digger was unceremoniously **sacked** after tweeting fairly innocuous comments about archaeological

pay- despite not even naming the company involved.

Your contract will usually have a clause about client confidentiality, and any photos or comments you post of the site you are digging on may breach it. News from many sites is embargoed so that press releases can be coordinated or adequate security organised to prevent nighthawkers trashing the place. Or of course because the developer just doesn't want the site findings discussed until it is all over. Either way you may find yourself in a sticky situation whether you identify the site or not, so be aware.

Website news

We have updated the DF pages on the IfA website, archived newsletters and articles are all there, plus flyers and membership forms. We'll be adding more materials as and when they are produced -so check it out:

<http://www.archaeologists.net/groups/diggers>

Cotswold Outdoor Discount

Did you know that IfA members can get a 15% discount at Cotswold Outdoors? If you are into the outdoors, or just need some new socks for site then you could start making back your IfA subs whilst shopping for anything from fleeces to sleeping bags, tents to torches.

Quote 'Institute for Archaeologists' at the till and show your IfA membership card. DF members should have been sent a discount code by email they can use. If you didn't receive it, let us know. You may need to speak to the manager as staff may not be immediately aware of the discount. The discount code is also valid for phone and online orders.

Please note this discount cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. If you have any difficulty using this offer please contact the IfA office (and let us know as well!).



Diggers' Forum on Facebook

Chris Clarke

facebook

In order to better communicate with its members better the Diggers' Forum has decided to set up its own Facebook page. Work to build the page is currently in progress, but it is hoped the page will go live by the end of May.

By signing up you'll be able to receive regular news and updates on DF activities, events and campaigns, as well as being able to contribute your own views, plus find details of how to join the DF itself if you're not already a member. This way you'll be able to get DF posts in the site hut on you smart phone and you'll never be out of the loop again.

Blossoms' Inn reunion: ten years on

Calling all Diggers who worked on the MoLAS/AOC excavations at Blossom's Inn, City of London during 2001!!!

Whether you can believe it not it has been 10 years since we all had a hand in discovering unique [Roman wells](#), bronze arms, a [medieval mikveh](#) and more Roman wall plaster than you can shake a stick at....and making unforgettable TV moments in the process. A site where friendships were forged and many happy memories made.

The passing of a decade since such a momentous event cannot go by without marking the occasion the way archaeologists know best -by having a bloody good piss up. The Blossom's Inn 10 year reunion party will be held at The George Inn, 77 Borough High Street, Southwark, London, SE1 1NH, from 5pm on Saturday 4th June 2011.

So, spread the word to anyone you know who was there! Whether you worked there for one day or 365 days it doesn't matter, attending is essential. You can't miss such an opportunity to catch up with old friends, reminisce on the Blossom's Inn experience, and share stories from the last 10 years. See you all there!

For more details please contact Chris Clarke at chrisclarke600@hotmail.co.uk.



Archaeologists at Blossoms' Inn, City of London, 2001. Were you there?



IfA validation for field staff

Jez Taylor

The IfA Validation Committee reviews new applications to join the Institute and applications for transfer to higher grades of membership. There are five grades: **Student**, **Affiliate**, **Practitioner** (PIfA), **Associate** (AlfA) and **Member** (MIfA). PIfA, AlfA and MIfA are **corporate** grades of membership, which entitle individuals to use their respective post-nominals, vote at general meetings, stand for IfA Council and serve on committees.

For field-staff the levels of responsibility required for each corporate grade can currently broadly (and briefly) be described as follows:

Practitioner: an archaeologist digging on site, competent at carrying out excavation and recording tasks, but working under supervision.

Associate: an archaeologist with a high level of working and background knowledge relevant to their role. An Associate member will have experience of directing sites (evaluations/mid-size excavations) and writing-up the results as gray literature (possibly full publication).

Member: an archaeologist who has successfully directed sites of considerable complexity in the field and completed the subsequent post-excavation work. This is likely to have included managing large groups of staff on-site, directing excavation of complex stratigraphy and carrying the post-excavation process through to full publication. A MIfA will usually be someone with several years experience at this level.

It should be stressed that the Validation Committee recognises there is no absolute definition of roles and responsibilities required to achieve each grade, so the descriptions above really should be viewed as a broad outline.

MIfA grade for field-archaeologists -recent changes

I joined the Validation Committee in 2002, shortly after upgrading from Practitioner to Associate level membership. After serving on the committee for a few years, I began reflecting on my own career progression and whether I would be able to upgrade to MIfA level at an appropriate point. It seemed the application requirements for the higher grade were weighted towards 'traditional' desk-based management positions and did not encourage applications from people working on site - however experienced and skilled they may be. My sense was that unless individuals had a very considerable publication record, it would be hard to provide a successful application for MIfA.

A key problem seemed to be a limited interpretation of what management entails. People responsible for carrying out complex excavation and post-excavation tasks undoubtedly need management skills -to direct their staff, interpret the archaeological sequence both on and off-site, resolve logistical problems/health and safety issues with contractors and to liaise with numerous interested parties such as clients, curators, contractors, finds specialists, media and the public.

Myself and other Diggers' Forum members on the committee suggested that we review the application process and look at ways of increasing MIfA applications from field-staff. This was taken on board immediately and new ways of assessing applications were worked into 2008/2009 revised editions of the Applicants' Handbook. The committee now uses a '**Competence matrix**' as part of the review process, which examines corporate



applicants' skills and responsibilities under four different headings: **Knowledge, Autonomy, Coping with complexity and Perception of context.** The matrix provides a straightforward means of analysing the breadth of individuals' skills-sets and responsibilities and helps look beyond sometimes narrow interpretations of job titles: manager, project officer, supervisor etc.

Since the revisions were put in place there has been an increase in the number of field-archaeologists applying for and achieving MIfA grade. I would certainly encourage PIfA and AlfA members to upgrade as their career progresses. MIfA level is entirely attainable and appropriate for archaeologists with high levels of responsibility within the field-archaeology sector. It is important that the Institute continues to recognise the contribution made by field-staff, who after all work at the very core of the profession.

AlfA for field-archaeologists in non-supervisory positions

In my view, the revisions to the Applicants' Handbook have been a considerable improvement and helped increase recognition of the role field-archaeologists play within the profession. The IfA grading system is largely based on the level of responsibility applicants undertake in their current position. This provides a means of judging how their career path is progressing and assessing the skills-set they have accrued that enables them to carry out their job. Having the IfA grade is a useful way of demonstrating a level of accomplishment to employers.

However, I would argue that one group are currently failed by the system. I know many extremely skilled and experienced field-archaeologists, who for personal or professional reasons have not taken-up supervisory positions; some who are temperamentally not suited to that type of role, others who simply prefer to concentrate on the hands-on process of excavating.

At the moment, Diggers in this category would

certainly be accepted at PIfA grade, but are unlikely to achieve AlfA or MIfA. Practitioner grade is generally gained relatively early in a person's career and does not necessarily reflect the knowledge and skills of highly experienced archaeologists in non-supervisory positions. I think it would be useful if the committee looked at ways of incorporating this group at AlfA level. Right now I suspect a substantial group of people working in the field do not feel there is an IfA membership grade that usefully represents their level of experience.

There is currently an opportunity to review the skills matrix for field staff so that an individual's skills and specialisms can be taken into greater account as well as their position on a line management chart: many archaeologist grade staff carry out complex and specialist tasks as well as often taking on levels of responsibility more usually seen in supervisory positions.

Diggers who may be operating at AlfA level may include those who are frequently solely responsible for surveying sites, or those that have particular skills at an advanced level such as timber or building recording or Diggers who have demonstrable skills and experience of advanced excavation and recording techniques such as those who deal with complex urban sequences.

The current skills matrix *can* cope with the individual circumstances of site staff, it is perhaps more an issue of overcoming the perceived simplistic 'responsibility' view of the grades.

One further issue is the evidence that is needed to demonstrate the applicant is at the required level. For those lucky enough to get regular appraisals and who maintain PDP plans and CPD logs this will be easier, however for many temporary staff these are not available or not priority. Good referees can go a long way to verifying an applicants level, however they also must receive clear advice on how field skills are now viewed.

The DF would like to see more field staff achieving the grade that they deserve and would like to hear from anyone who is considering an upgrade as they may have useful perspectives on revising the skills matrix.



Skills and training in the archaeology profession -an overview

Mary Neale

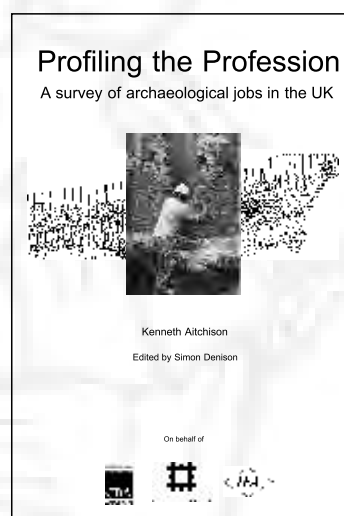
Various archaeological skills surveys have been carried out over the past two decades. Three examples of surveys are provided and a more lengthy presentation of the findings of the most recent surveys is then outlined below. The surveys highlight key skills that are needed in the profession. I have related these skills sets to examples of the types of resources and courses that can help professionals to develop their skills portfolio.

A preliminary review of training in professional archaeology was commissioned by **English Heritage** on behalf of the **Archaeology Training Forum** (ATF) in November 1998. The web page <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/training/survey.html> is an online copy and it cites some previous studies. The preliminary review found that there was a lack of structured vocational learning, particularly at entry level, and no clear career development path for individuals. For this reason the **NVQ** system was established using the **National Occupational Standards** framework.

The **Profiling the Profession** series began with Kenneth Aitchison's publication in 1999. The next two publications in the series were written with Rachel Edwards and date from 2003 and 2008. This is one of a number of **IfA** projects designed to gather information from a survey of people working in the profession. It includes information about types of jobs, ranges of skills, the various organisations and training available in the profession. The

reports contain a summary of the skills most required to fill skills gaps and shortages.

In the February 2010 publication **An analysis of the skills needs of the creative and cultural industries in the UK** the **Creative & Cultural Skills Sector** provided statistical information about skills and training in the cultural heritage sector. The survey results are broken down into various cultural sectors. I have extracted information from the section for the archaeology profession (12% of the sector) and that information is provided in the following discussion.



Survey findings

The following discussion includes statistics, extracted from the most recent surveys that relate specifically to skills requirements within the archaeology profession. Both *Skills gaps* and *skills shortages* were identified, the term *skills gaps* refer to a skill that an existing employee can fill through training. *Skills shortage* relates to specialist skills or consultancy work that require longer term training and are usually recruitment. It was found that archaeological *skills gaps* can be filled by training an existing employee but are considered by companies to be more prevalent and therefore more problematic to solve than skills shortages. By contrast, *skills shortages* occur less frequently but recruitment requires extra time and resources. Problems in recruiting people include too few

experienced candidates to fill the posts: 41% of organisations have difficulties in recruiting specialist skills.

So how much have skills gaps and shortages impacted on archaeology companies? 76% of organisations have identified such training needs. Whilst 65% of organisations have a training budget over a quarter of employers identify that limited time for training is a contributory factor to a lack of resolution of training needs.

What do businesses want?

Businesses are looking for employees with BSc, Pg Dip, MIfA; experienced diggers who are multi-skilled (surveying, recording, finds, recovery and processing, environmental sample taking), have report writing experience and a broad understanding of the profession and the way the whole process of archaeological recording works. Some companies also look for Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) cards and have a limited training budget.

How does this affect archaeologists working for these companies?

For those with more permanent or longer-term contracts there is a greater chance of training being provided to fill skills gaps. But for recent graduates this is more difficult. Most graduates are competing with experienced field staff and are not equipped with the specific type and range of skills listed above. Many graduates who have a BA or MA are not multi-skilled as outlined above, and have a limited understanding of the profession *but* are willing to learn. Employers consider that graduates lack not only practical field experience and technical expertise, but also the conceptual, analytical and interpretative skills required.

Skills gaps at professional entry level can become circuitous such that graduates find themselves on short term field contracts for prolonged periods and are unemployed between contracts. Many leave the profession as a result. In 1998, 30% of graduates failed to establish careers in archaeology and moved into other sectors. What is the percentage today?

Short-term contracts remain common when starting a field career, and there has been a marked drop in new field jobs since the start of the recession.

Graduates' views

Graduates have spent time considering the fact that their qualifications don't meet the skills gaps/shortages in the industry. They are aware that they lack skills such as business, leadership and management skills as well as expertise.

A way forward?

Various bodies (see the Who's Who section on next page) have offered bursaries, graduate training schemes and work placements in recent years. Some schemes such as the **English Heritage trainee scheme** and the **EPPIC** scheme are on hold at the moment and other schemes are due to end in 2012. The IfA wish to promote these schemes as exemplars to businesses and support commercial units so that they can take over training provision to meet their requirements.

Your employer may be willing to invest in you as part of the training provision for its business, so seek advice. Discuss the IfA's plans to support organisations in structured training provision with infrastructure support. This will help to lessen their costs, and the time and resources required. Some support is already in place and other support systems will be put in place shortly. The IfA can provide further information.

What is the NVQ system?

The NVQ system is considered to be a suitable way of gaining the skills identified as skills gaps and skills shortages. Only Level 3 is available at the moment. Level 4 is under review and Level 5 is being formulated.

The [NVQ in Archaeological Practice](#) has been developed as a modular qualification by the [Archaeology Training Forum](#) and was launched in April 2007. It identifies a set of skills for each module based on national



occupational standards. 66% of employers said they would give 'considerable' or 'very considerable' support to staff in working towards vocational qualifications (Aitchison & Edwards 2003, 59). More information on the NVQ system is provided on the IfA web site and the Profiling the Profession series.

What is the benefit to businesses?

The advantages of the NVQ system for companies include providing for succession planning, reducing the requirement to fill skills gaps and shortages by recruiting for new staff and thus easing pressure on more senior staff and the need for external specialists. At the same time IfA registered organisations will be fulfilling the mandatory CPD requirements. Other benefits include attracting, retaining and motivating staff, raising standards and saving time and money.

What is the benefit to you?

The NVQ has many advantages over the *ad hoc* approach of traditional training. The NVQ system is a passport type commitment allowing the candidate to move from company to company, if necessary, in order to gain the right mix of skills. Undertaking this type of structured training builds confidence and helps the candidate to identify the potential and direction of their own career. Further advantages include working while training, allowing the candidate to develop transferable and specialist skills with support from experts. The NVQ system also provides an identifiable accreditation, and if you are an IfA member it fulfils your CPD requirements.

Beyond working while training, what are the other means of gaining NVQ credits and CPD?

I would suggest training courses to develop vocational skills, but note that not all post-graduate courses are vocational. Only 82 out of 344 are vocational so read through the modules on offer carefully. Examples of vocational courses include: management of cultural resources; landscape archaeology; maritime archaeology; environmental archaeology; osteo/forensic archaeology; building recording and conservation; material

specialisms such as bone or metal; and computer related skills.

How do I navigate through all the options?

To help you to expand your skills we have provided some examples of how you might begin to fill the skills gaps and shortages identified in the surveys.

The information tables at the end of this article organise skills into four groups: **expertise, IT, marketing and fundraising abilities and management** and provide information on courses and resources that help to build those skills. While not exhaustive, I hope the tables provide you with ideas to help you make an informed decision between the various options. For further examples courses, conferences, day schools, fieldwork training, fact sheets and directories of organisations and groups try CBA, TORC and BAJR. Did you know there was a CPD database? <http://www.findcpd.com/>

Skills, resources and courses: a Who's Who of resource providers

Check out if the course is approved by any of the following bodies.

ATF - <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/training/atf.html>

The Archaeology Training Forum is a delegate body with an interest in the issues of training and career development in archaeology. The ATF's forward plans are currently guided by **A Vision for Training and Career Development in Archaeology** (Aitchison 2008).

torc TRAINING ONLINE
RESOURCE CENTRE
FOR ARCHAEOLOGY

TORC - <http://www.torc.org.uk/index.asp>

TORC is the **Training Online Resource Centre for Archaeology**. This web site also provides information on professional functions and standards in archaeological professional competence. Occupational standards form the basis of the government's strategy for vocational qualifications and training.



IfA - <http://www.archaeologists.net/>

The Institute for Archaeologists is a democratic professional organisation, run by an elected council, and supported by committees responsible for all areas of the Institute's work.

As well as funding and facilitating training, some of the **National Heritage Agencies** are also able to deliver skills-based training directly.

English Heritage - <http://www.helm.org.uk/>

English Heritage provides advice about heritage issues to and is funded by the **Department for Culture, Media and Sport**, donations, and commercial activities. **HELM (Historic Environment Local Management)** provides accessible information, training and guidance to local governments.



ENGLISH HERITAGE

IHBC - <http://ihbconline.co.uk/>

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation is a professional body for practitioners. It provides information on training and networking opportunities as well as blogs to air your views.



CBA - www.britarch.ac.uk

The Council for British Archaeology is an educational charity working to involve people in archaeology and to promote the appreciation and care of the historic environment. They provide a wide range of information and organise event.

Further resources

ADS - <http://ads.ahds.ac.uk/learning/>

The Archaeology Data Service is a searchable digital archive for archaeology and also includes an excellent Learning + Teaching page.



BAJR - <http://www.bajr.org/>

British Archaeological Jobs and Resources is a good resource that provides a range of links some of which have been highlighted in specific sections in this article. 'Links' provides information on 'Planning Basics' which is a useful read that provides explanations of the type of archaeological interventions that take place and what it means to the developer and it provides a nexus between the legislative framework and the contents of a WSI.



OASIS - <http://oasis.ac.uk/>

Provides online access to the index of archaeological investigations and brings together the Archaeology Data Service among others.

Examples of training

Some specific examples of training are given on the following pages including articles on the NVQ, **Skills Passports**, and some in-house training schemes developed by a commercial archaeology unit.

Over to you!

Financial and time constraints and finding the right types of training provision are identified as the most common obstacles in filling skills gaps. Do you spend far too much of your personal time and money obtaining professional training and updating your skills? Tell us your own experiences so that we can voice your opinions and draw on other peoples' experiences.

Your views and comments on the information provided are not only welcome but needed, so please do get in contact.



Skills sets	Examples of resources	Examples of courses (please check modules carefully if you're choosing courses for vocational skills)
<p>Expertise or experience gained from working on various archaeological site types and construction types includes: surveying; recording; finds; recovery and processing; environmental sample taking; problem solving.</p>	<p>English Heritage's HELM website provides a range of guidance about the management and protection of the historic environment. You may also find the case studies useful as a means of keeping up to date with technical developments and as a useful learning tool;</p> <p>Training as a digger on training excavations is useful for those with no field experience. And for those with some field experience consider contacting universities and societies about volunteering or working as a trainee supervisor or trainee specialist;</p> <p>BAJR provides specialist links and 10 guides on the archaeology of landscapes, earthwork survey, CAD and archaeomagnetic dating;</p> <p>The IfA have specialist groups that provide training;</p> <p>ADS or OASIS provides access to excavation reports.</p>	<p>English Heritage Regional Science Advisors provide free regional courses and may consider delivering courses to individual units, if requested;</p> <p>Oxford University in partnership with English Heritage provides a range of short historic environment courses;</p> <p>West Dean, Chichester and Weald and Downland Museum offers a 5 day residential course on Measured Survey for Cultural Heritage;</p> <p>Birmingham University focus on field skills; Also consider what is available at Exeter University and Leicester University among others;</p> <p>IHBC list courses available relating to buildings;</p> <p>HELM Training courses are free of charge (unless stated) as they are funded through the HELM training programme and are usually one day courses.</p>
<p>Marketing and fund raising includes: company profile and image on site; visitor services and facilities; fund raising.</p>	<p>Get involved - The Festival of British Archaeology http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ CBA and BAJR websites provide resources</p>	
<p>Management Skills includes: financial, project, and organisational; heritage presentation; heritage interpretation for the public; achieving best value; quality assessment; health and safety; business excellence.</p>	<p>MAP2 and the more up-to-date MoRPHE which includes aspects of other management tools but is simplified and easy to follow - http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/publications/morphe-project-managers-guide/</p>	<p>Learndirect online courses - http://www.learndirect.co.uk/ Business link is free and provides a training directory- http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/layer?topicId=1074400185</p>



<p>IT Skills includes: internet use - particularly for research; file transfer; data analysis; spreadsheets and word processing; GIS; email; digital archiving; electronic media for public access; design and use of digital databases.</p>	<p>BAJR and ADS are two of the websites that provide tutorials and free downloads of a wide range of packages to work on. For the generic link please see the 'who's who' section.</p>	<p>Learndirect online courses - http://www.learndirect.co.uk/</p>
<p>Some courses and training frameworks are designed to provide a range of skills</p>	<p>Looking through the job specification and person specification will help you to identify key skills required by employers for specific roles. For those just beginning on a career path in heritage then the BAJR 'Getting Started' is a helpful guide.</p>	<p>Ironbridge Institute focuses on historic environment and conservation practice. University of Sussex also has useful courses in practical and buildings archaeology, and University of Oxford has online, short and post-grad courses in a range of subjects</p>
<p>Health and safety Health and safety is not often included in traditional courses but is a compulsory core unit of the NVQ modules.</p>	<p>Become familiar with risk assessment documents produced by archaeology companies. Templates are available on the IfA web site More information is available on the Health and Safety Executive web site -</p>	<p>Construction Skills Certification Scheme (CSCS) cards - Consider becoming a first aider - www.redcrossfirstaidtraining.co.uk/</p>

NVQ in Archaeological Practice

Sadie Watson

We all know that, with a few notable exceptions, most archaeology degrees do not prepare you for a career in field archaeology, although to be fair the universities would argue that is not their intention (and that's a big issue for another day!). So when you are looking for a digging job how can you demonstrate your skills and experience in a way that employers will appreciate?

This is where the NVQ comes in, for some of its intended audience at least. It was introduced to enable archaeologists to formally show that they have a particular set of skills,

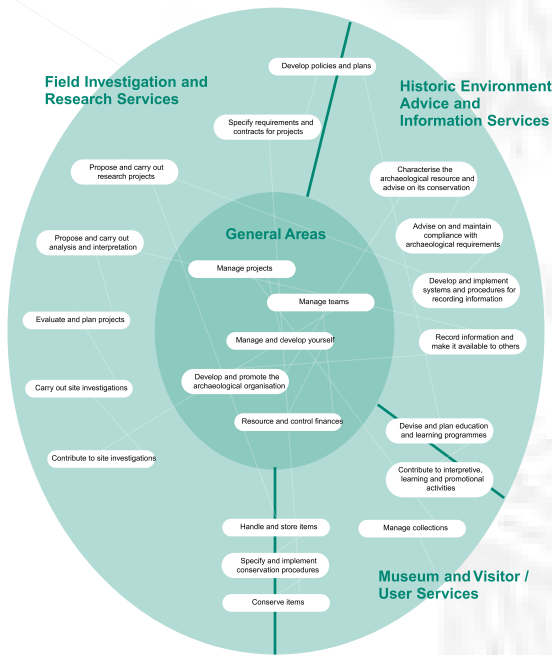
competencies or experience, all of which are vocational and relate specifically to tasks you would be expected to do as a professional archaeologist.

These tasks were identified after the National Occupational Standards were finalised by the IfA and CHNTO (Cultural Heritage National Training Organisation), and are intended to present a recognised career structure for archaeology. So far nobody would argue that this is a bad idea- to map the skills necessary to do our job and outline a progression through the levels is something that we had needed for some time.

The NVQ is assessed at work, although this could refer to a volunteer or community project, assessed by a professional. Your assessors are unlikely to be colleagues at work, and can assess several students at once. It takes a few months to complete, with a meeting with your assessor every few weeks. The current cost of a Level 3 (entry level) is c £1200, a Level 4 (experienced professional) c £1700. Most of the evidence you gather to exhibit your skills

will take the form of interviews or professional colleagues' testimonies, with formally written work forming the minority.

It should be said that the NVQ does not seek to replace a university education, which is valuable for many reasons, and not just the qualification at the end of it! However the likelihood of crippling debt and a job as a digger earning £15K after 3 years may mean people are less likely to embark upon a 3 year course.



[Research shows that about 60% of the profession is employed in field investigation and research - this includes people working in archaeological units and societies, universities, as specialist consultants and researchers. About a third of the sector is employed in roles that are primarily earth providing advice and information, with managing the historic environment, in local authorities, heritage organisations, national agencies and private consultants. 10% of archaeologists work in museums, visitor and community services, managing sites and collections, interpreting and presenting archaeology for the public.]

NOS framework for professional development in archaeology

The NVQ will also be of obvious value to mature students or those changing careers, volunteer groups and local societies, as it will provide people with a recognised standard of practise. On a personal note, I would also like to see the NVQ becoming recognised by employers as an entry level qualification alternative to a degree. Some professional units already have the NVQ as an additional criteria in their redundancy matrices (allowing staff under threat to get extra points in their favour), which sadly is a regular reality for many of us.

So who should think about doing an NVQ? Those at the start of their careers primarily: with little field experience the NVQ can give you a decent starting CV. Those of us who have been around a bit longer, (with or without a degree) will probably rely on the experience we have to

demonstrate our vast knowledge of planning and finds retrieval!

For more information contact the IfA: <http://www.archaeologists.net/learning/nvq>

The NVQ: an assessor's view

At MoLA we have embarked upon training of two assessors to take the NVQ forward. This is mainly due to the fact that we have an IfA bursary student with us for a year: our Archaeological Apprentice, who is gaining a wide variety of professional skills in all departments and studying the NVQ at the same time. However, there is also scope for my employer to advance the take-up of the NVQ on a wider scale by increasing the value of the qualification in professional quarters, recognising the vocational value of it and employing NVQ graduates as field staff.

There is obviously another big side issue, with potential financial benefits for an assessment centre coming from students signing up and paying to be assessed.

From the assessor's point of view the NVQ is very particular in what it asks of a student: each task has to be completed and signed off by other colleagues as well as the assessor, and hard 'evidence' needs to be presented as part of the portfolio. This evidence could be copies of field records, site photographs showing excavation skills, attendance at H&S training sessions, final versions of CAD plans etc etc. Commonly used are testimonials and witness statements- a short form signed by a professional colleague to acknowledge that a certain task has been done. The assessing has taken a day per month of our time, although this will speed up as we get more used to the process, and it would be more economical if we were assessing more than one student at a time.

A big benefit that I can already see is that the variety of tasks undertaken enables the NVQ student to 'have a go' at most tasks, thereby defining which paths they want to follow, and which they don't. I am pleased to say that our student so far is very keen to stay in the field team as opposed to going into surveying or other specialisms, and not as a result of any coaching from me!

We were hoping to bring you an article on the Skills Passports scheme, however due to various reasons we will have to put it into next issue.

In its place we've got an article about *you*.

The Diggers' Archive

Chiz Harward

In my youth we used to have a Day Book on each of the sites I worked on. It was a hard-bound notebook where the supervisor or, in those days, the Director, would write all their thoughts: who was digging which feature, initial interpretations and ideas, visitors and notable events. Detailed descriptions, sketches, plans and notes. And then at some point us Diggers gained access to the Day Book and started adding our own ideas of what was going on, of what we were doing: both on-site, and off. It was generally good humoured –if sometimes a bit competitive or *risqué* and was often illustrated by sketches and cartoons that captured the *whole* of the site, both the digging present and the excavated past.

Today's Day Book sheets are more often filled with sterile notes on numbers of trenches pulled, of Tree Protection Orders, plant deliveries and minuted conversations with Site Managers, but there is surely still room for a record of the present alongside the past? We are part of the story after all, people are often as interested in us as they are about what we are digging up, so lets record it, somewhere, somehow.

The same goes with site photographs, there are scores of shots of ditch sections, but where are the photos of us? Where are the photos of The Site, rather than of The Archaeology. We take general shots and lecture shots and working shots, and maybe even an end of site photo, but where is the archive of us? I mean, look at the photo of the Blossom's Inn team on page 9, that photograph is a record of the site as much as a photo of the amazing archaeology we dug up. We need more photos of us, doing the job,



photograph © Dave Webb

reading the paper, having a laugh, or having a rant. Otherwise we will fade and disappear, only the 'Directors' getting a mention in the history of digging.

Some of the photos in this issue are by Dave Webb. Dave set out to record the reality of digging, not just the posed working shots with carefully arranged logos, but *portraits* of real diggers: his friends and colleagues. His website (the Diggers' Alternative Archive: <http://www.archdiggers.co.uk/diggers/frameset.html>) is a great inspiration for those who want to capture a record of how it happened and who was there. Its well worth a browse, you might not know anyone in it -I spotted a couple of friends- but you'll somehow know the characters from every site you've worked on. We're planning an interview with Dave about his photography in the next issue: asking him about his attitudes to photography, as well as how to take that perfect shot!

Another great website is Paul Everill's Invisible Diggers: <http://www.invisiblediggers.net/>. Paul was a founder member of the DF and his website carries some of the responses to his survey of diggers for his PhD on commercial archaeology. Well worth a read.

We want to showcase great photos *of us by us*, if *you've* got decent images, preferably with a short (printable) story to go with them and you'd like to share them, then [send them in](#).

On-site: Training for Diggers

Chiz Harward

I know that there will be many Diggers reading these pages they will say 'that's fine, but there's nothing here that is relevant to me'. For too many Diggers training is something that just never really happened. The reality for many is that they did a degree which had only a limited amount of practical instruction and studied few topics that were really relevant to working as a commercial archaeologist. A lucky break at a first unit may have involved some hands-on training from an old-lag or supervisor in how to *actually* dig and record, but for many it's a gradual accretion of knowledge and skills both good and bad over long months and years. And of course when you are moving from unit to unit every few weeks or months -and they each have a different recording system- there is little chance to really establish your skills beyond mattocking and barrowing, or to receive any serious formal training.

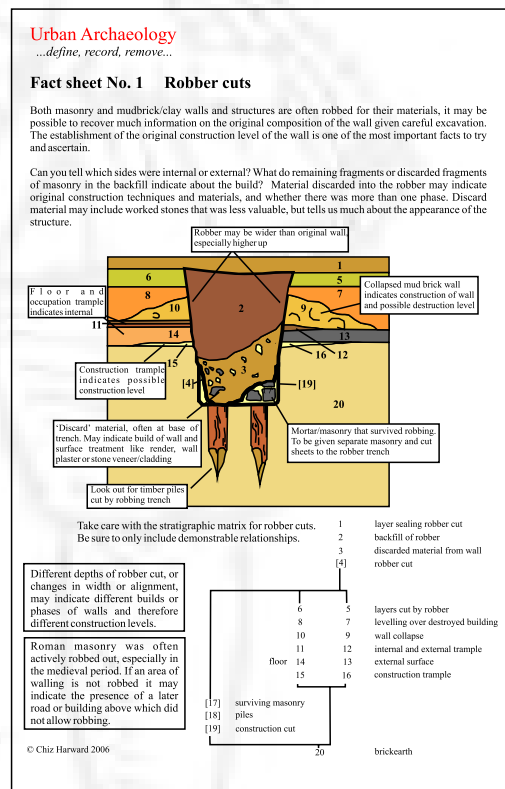
When in London I spent several years training a seemingly never-ending stream of new archaeologists in Single Context Recording and the intricacies of excavating complex urban sequences. New diggers would gradually gain confidence (sometimes too much confidence) and hopefully a few would see the light, and get a real handle on what they were doing and became consummate excavators. For many others they learnt enough to get by, and would be gone from the profession within a year or two. No formal training was ever offered, it was all *ad hoc* and given by the Senior Archaeologists out of concern for getting the job done properly and because years ago someone had taken the time to help train *us*

The nature of commercial archaeology can make training for site staff very difficult: staff are often working away at short notice, so courses are hard to stick, and you can be almost guaranteed that if you get training in a shiny new piece of kit you will never see it again until

you have forgotten everything about it. But we all need to develop our skills to progress, learn new techniques and gain new knowledge.

How do we make training relevant and long-lasting for site staff? One way I have used is to give a 15 minute toolbox talk each week on a subject pertinent to the site. A short seminar out on site can give information direct to where it is needed, even better when you have a specialist out on a visit -get them to do a quick seminar on their subject and how it is relevant to your site.

If these discussions can be backed up by handouts -however rough- then all to the good as staff can keep these to refer to at a later date. Some units have laminated crib sheets with the basics written out, very useful for new



Example of site handout

staff but for staff who have learnt the drawing conventions not so useful: they need something more.

Archaeological employers needs to realise that they need to continuously train staff so they can not only do the job, but also so that they remain focused and interested and learn new skills. This should be tied in with Continuous

Professional Development (CPD) and Personal Development Plans (PDP), and that can all be done whether or not your employer gives you time or support for this. You can use CPD and PDP as a way of organising any on or off-site training you do receive, and identify where you need more training and experience.

The training needs of new staff and those at the start of their careers are often more obvious than those of more established archaeologists. Employers often concentrate on new staff as if they can't use a dumpy level or fill out a sample sheet they can be dead weight on site. There are several trainee schemes at units, as well as opportunities like the IfA Bursaries for a lucky few, but for those staff who have acquired and consolidated the basic skills and are looking at where to go next there can seem to be less on offer.

Mary's article on what courses are available and where to look should be a good starting place for anyone thinking about seriously investing in their career development and looking at where to go next. The NVQ and Skills Passports are also worth investigating - especially if your employer has an assessor on the team, but for many staff with a few years experience under their belt the options can seem limited and most doors closed. Combine this with the information vacuum that can envelop you if you are working away all the time and it can be both very discouraging and very confusing.

Supervisor Designate Scheme

Some units are looking at what they can do to train existing staff and address endemic training issues and long running problems, such as how you turn a good all-round digger into a supervisor. [Cotswold Archaeology](#) have developed an intensive 6 month scheme for training potential future supervisors. CA have committed themselves to building a core team of archaeologists and the scheme has one clear objective: to help produce the Supervisors, Project Officers and managers of the future.

The scheme is open to all archaeologists employed at CA. Although you don't receive

any extra payment and there is no guarantee of a supervisory position at the end of it, successful designates will have gained additional formal training, essential skills and experience in a supportive environment and will be well-placed for any future promotions.

The scheme has been running for just under a year and results so far are positive with two archaeologists joining the scheme and gaining valuable supervisory experience whilst being aided by training, coaching and mentoring by experienced colleagues. Work tasks include the whole range of supervisory tasks from setting up sites, dealing with clients and contractors, to machine watching, paperwork, checking and report writing. The successful designate walks out of the scheme with solid experience and new skills and awareness. Feedback from the two designates has been very positive and CA hope to continue the scheme in the future for other archaeologists.

Many companies have also increasingly turned to temporary secondments to allow archaeologist-grade staff to gain an insight into working in other departments such as writing desk-based assessments or working in Geomatics. These secondments are usually temporary but may lead to a permanent change in direction from some candidates and are a useful way of trying a new direction without fully committing.

For the company such secondments are a way of keeping hold of skilled staff if fieldwork goes quiet, and allow them to respond to work spikes in other departments. They allow staff to gain new skills and that is obviously good for employers as it creates a flexible team that can adapt to work flows. Secondments which involve data collection, analysis and report writing can also prove a useful way of checking out skills that have often lain dormant since university.

Many secondments carry no additional pay and you need to make sure that although you are doing more work you are still getting a good deal overall. On balance many will say that a well-structured secondment or designate scheme will repay you in bankable experience and skills. That has to be a personal decision for each Digger.



Events Diary May-August 2011

Gwilym Williams

We'd be grateful if people could send us details of exhibitions, open days, lectures, training events, and other events of interest to members. We're also happy to run any short news pieces that members would like to share. If you have any news, events or dates for the diary then please email the diary editor at gwilymwilliams70@yahoo.co.uk for inclusion in the next issue.

21 May Prehistoric Ceramics Research Group
Spring meeting and AGM University of Leicester
<http://www.pcrq.org.uk/Meeting.htm>

10-11 June, Cambridge. Society for Roman
Archaeology: Annual Dinner Weekend The
Museums of Cambridge
<http://www.associationromanarchaeology.org/newevents.htm>

4 June Blossoms' Inn Reunion, The George,
Southwark. Contact Chris Clarke for details
chrisclarke600@hotmail.co.uk.

4-5 June Helmsley, North Yorks. Spring Meeting
and AGM Royalty, Religion and Rust!
<http://hist-met.org/hmsagm2011prog.pdf>

11-15 July Ancient Crafts and Technologies
Michelham Priory
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cce/prospectivestudents/cce/practicalarch>

22-25 July. Society for Roman Archaeology Long
Weekend Summer Tour: Roman North Wales
<http://www.associationromanarchaeology.org/newevents.htm>

30 July and 13 August. The Art of Flint Knapping
Amberley Museum and Heritage Centre, West
Sussex

Investigate flint tools from the Palaeolithic to the
Bronze Age and produce your own replicas.
<http://www.sussex.ac.uk/cce/prospectivestudents/cce/practicalarch>

7 August Folkstone. Self Drive Day Tour: Folkstone
Excavation
<http://www.associationromanarchaeology.org/newevents.htm>

26 August - 1 September, Cork, Ireland.
Association for Industrial Archaeology, Conference
<http://industrial-archaeology.org/aconf11.pdf>

2-4 September, Douglas, Isle of Man. Society for
Post-medieval Archaeology: The Archaeology of
Mercantile Capitalism
<http://www.spma.org.uk/events.php>

Join us and make your voice heard!

The Diggers' Forum is the IfA Special Interest Group for field workers, that includes EVERYONE who primarily works at the sharp end of archaeology out on site.

The DF is open to all and represents field archaeologists at all levels -from a student considering professional archaeology to Project Officers running major excavations. The Diggers' Forum

represents YOUR views on a wide variety of matters within and beyond the IfA, we are the second largest SIG within the IfA and the bigger we are the bigger our voice.

If you are a member of the IfA membership of the Diggers' Forum is FREE, for non-members there is a subscription of £10 a year. To join email:
groups@archaeologists.net



The Southport Group: time for change?

The Southport Group draft report on '**planning-led investigation in the historic environment**' has caused a bit of a stir in some circles. The report has been put out for consultation and is available on the IfA website. The Southport 'Vision' is envisioned as a 'once or twice in a professional lifetime' opportunity to refocus the heritage sector and follow PPS5's principles in building a heritage sector that adds value to development, makes public participation the norm not the exception, and that promotes collaboration between all stakeholders.

So what does this mean for us? Well it could mean quite a bit. The DF welcomes the chance to look at the profession from top to bottom and to refocus our industry on where we want to be rather than where we are. The report explicitly talks of the poor wages of archaeologists and the need to improve training and professionalisation. The DF firmly believe that any far-reaching and wide-ranging 'Vision' for the future of planning-led heritage and archaeology must also include credible plans to sort out pay, conditions and career progression in the profession.

The DF welcome many aspects of Southport: its reaffirmation of the need for archaeologists to engage with the public and share our results with them; its promotion of research frameworks and research centres; and its backing of accessible HERs. There is much that is good in the report, but the Southport Group report has spawned rumours of hidden agendas and even conspiracies that it will end professional digging and replace us all with unpaid volunteers. The creation of the IfA community archaeology SIG has even been seen as proof that the Southport Vision is a done deal. Why?

The key phrase causing concern has been make '*public participation the norm not the exception*'. This single phrase has worried many that we are about to throw away our hard-won professionalism and standards and require volunteers on every site with a corresponding effect on pay and conditions. '*Back to before PPG16*' was how one old lag put it, '*when we had a director, a couple of paid supervisors and a planner and a bunch of kids, students and vollies on £42 a week doing the digging*'. Many of us in the DF started back in the day as volunteers and like to think we did good work, but we all realise that however much the wages haven't risen, the standards have.

Now we all agree that archaeology and heritage should be for all, and we all agree that we need more open days, viewing gantries, posters on hoardings and community excavations, but these should be at a level appropriate to the site -and that is one area where Southport falls down. It does not qualify its recommendations with realities. The report is meant to be about developer-led archaeology, yet *some* have seen it as a volunteers' charter.

Real concerns have been raised over how far this new 'norm' of public participation will go, and how it will be reconciled with professional standards and developer-led archaeology, much of which takes place on construction sites and to tight deadlines. Much of Southport is about allowing public participation within the wider heritage sector, not just archaeology, and not just excavations, but it is unclear how this will be possible in a world of cuts and closures when development-control archaeologists are increasingly stretched or disappearing.

The Southport 'Vision' requires strong and effective development-control archaeologists to not only deal with the planning requirements but also act as intermediaries between clients, commercial contracting archaeologists and wider public groups, whether they be local societies, interested locals or researchers. These 'gatekeepers' are already stretched and under threat of further cuts, with the additional load of Southport work will the whole system collapse?

If we don't have any effective monitoring then how do we ensure the professional standards that Southport rightly demands? One way apparently appears to be through professionalisation of the heritage industry, although how this works alongside increased use of volunteers is not clear. *Certainly there is nothing in place now that can deal with this new Vision.*

Many archaeologists are concerned that developers or employers will use community involvement as leverage to cut costs or win contracts, and that there will be downward pressure and negative effects on wages and job security. One correspondent felt that 'the use of cheap labour in the form of local group and volunteers will directly impact upon the low paid junior staff who are undertaking the field work forcing these graduates to leave the profession. Their wages forced down by people willing to do the work for free, their opportunities to work also removed by volunteers.'

Interestingly a job advert for 'site technicians' at MoLA has just gone out offering less pay than the standard MoLA Archaeologist grade. The post '*might ideally suit students of Archaeology or*



members of local societies who wish to extend their knowledge of commercial archaeology by taking part in excavations'. MoLA has often taken on relatively unskilled staff to cope with large excavations, but this has almost always been at full Archaeologist grade and pay.

Archaeology is a job that requires a complex set of skills allied with on-the-job experience, we have worked hard to try and create a profession from scratch over the last twenty years. No-one would suggest that where we are now is where we want to be, but we must safeguard the better aspects of the profession. There is much in Southport that reiterates current best practice and which is to be applauded but there is much that concerns us.

Diggers' Forum Committee

DF principal concerns

The DF discussed the Southport Group report with Pete Hinton (IfA Chief Exec and Southport Group member) at our committee meeting in May and Pete agreed to show the Group a letter from DF asking for resolution on our concerns:

'We agree with the ideal that public participation in archaeology should be increased and encouraged, however there are concerns over the phrase 'public participation should be the norm not the exception', and would appreciate clarification as to what this means exactly.

We feel that participation should be appropriate and not undermine professional practise, particularly in terms of fieldwork. The IfA and others have consistently championed the idea of commercial archaeologists as trained and qualified professionals, and we worry that this may be eroded. Can the Southport Group confirm that they will provide more explicit guidance on this issue?

There are also serious concerns that the strict monitoring of public participation will become more difficult for the current curatorial community to manage (particularly in the event of fieldwork). We should be encouraging the use of ROs for commercial work, and enforcing the IfA own standards and guidance. How does this fit with the proposal to increase public participation?

Diggers' Forum Committee'

Southport Group response

We received the following reply from Pete Hinton, Chief Exec of the IfA and member of the Southport Group:

Many thanks for your message, the content of which I raised with the Southport Group today. The Group's report is out for consultation and will be revised in June in the light of responses: a response from the Diggers' Forum would be extremely helpful in shaping the final report. I hope the responses below will assist DF in making it[s] response.

1. *The intentions behind the recommendations for increasing opportunities for public participation are as you would expect and carry no hidden agenda. The phrase 'the norm rather than the exception' was identified at IfA conference as one that needs some qualification, and may well be rephrased along the lines of 'consideration of public participation should be standard practice'. You are quite right that it would be helpful to emphasise that there are very many possible ways for involving the public ranging from notice boards and a hole in the hoarding to the full hands-on experience, and that different projects will present very different needs and possibilities. The Southport Group won't try to match the options to types of projects, but hopes that the sector will be able to if it chooses to take the recommendations forward.*

2. *It is not the intention of the Southport Group, nearly all of who are IfA members and committed to the Institute's policy statement on the use of volunteers, to undermine either professional standards or commercial practice. I don't think the Southport Group itself will provide a much larger statement than that (and what is in the report already), but the Group hopes that any products arising from recommendations 1 and 4 would. Effective guidance would have to advise on how to provide greater opportunities for public participation without compromising the principles set out in the policy statement (and I cannot envisage it being endorsed by IfA it doesn't).*

3. *The Group agrees that the best practice examples are out there, and that it is the planning environment that has discouraged their widespread adoption. It does not envisage a solution involving curatorial services imposing ever tighter and more prescriptive controls on a project-by-project basis: a grown-up profession shouldn't need it and a reduced-capacity local authority cadre could not deliver it. Rather, as I hope 3.7 shows, it would like to see commercial work restricted to those who have [been] accredited as competent providers of*



professional services (eg IfA Registered Organisations), who would be committed to a more comprehensive and demanding set of standards and guidance than can presently be imposed.

4. And those Standards and guidance should guide Registered Organisations on how to provide opportunities for public participation that uphold (or raise) the standards of the profession for all areas of archaeological work, including a new one for participation.

I hope that clarifies the questions and will help members of Diggers' Forum to respond. [...]
All the best

Pete

DF Initial response to Southport Group Draft Report

The Diggers' Forum has written the following initial response to the Southport consultation, we need to get your comments, preferably in the form of recommendations -or just whether you agree or disagree- before May 30th. We will be collating your comments and revising our response as well as making detailed recommendations. We would also urge you to send in your own responses to southport@archaeologists.net by June 3rd.

'The Diggers' Forum welcome that the report specifically mentions the poor pay of professional archaeologists in the contracting sector; and the report appears to be indirectly concerned with raising pay through increased professionalisation and training. For the Southport Vision to work on any level, and and if we are to maintain a viable body of professionals able to deliver on improved standards and community involvement, then the heritage industry *must* address the endemic problems of pay and career progression that exist in our profession. All parties in the debate over pay and conditions have expressed their desire to improve the profession in this regard.

The DF calls for the employers, trade unions and professional organisations to meet to formulate a plan to resolve this ongoing crisis and to implement clear steps to get where we all want to be: archaeology as a viable and sustainable career choice. The first step could be taken through the implementation of the recommendations of the IfA Benchmarking Archaeological Salaries Report.

The Southport Group report specifically relates to

'planning-led investigation in the Historic Environment' which includes all aspects of the historic environment (including archaeology) of both a destructive and non-destructive nature. The report properly acknowledges that heritage belongs to all and that the value of the historic environment lies in its appreciation and understanding by the wider population. The Diggers' Forum is in complete accordance with this view.

The Diggers' Forum is also committed to the principle that archaeology is a valuable and finite resource and that it should be protected even if this may mean restricting access to some aspects of archaeological work. Effectively, *it's not about professional versus amateur, but rather about professionalism versus amateurishness*. A drive towards professionalism with better standards more rigidly enforced would be of greater benefit to all parties.

We welcome the recommendation to establish regional archaeological centres such as the current LAARC, although we note that funding of the LAARC is not currently secured beyond the end of the current financial year. We also welcome the clear message that a strong curatorial and HER service is essential for the entire system to operate although again there are issues regarding lack of funding for these services in the future.

We are however extremely concerned about the effect of the key phrase *'public participation should be the norm not the exception'* on the archaeological profession. *This sentence underpins much of Section 3 of the report, however there is no explicit definition of what this public participation should involve and at what level, and this is a serious flaw in both the report and its recommendations.*

We call for urgent clarification of the meaning and scope of the phrase *'public participation should be the norm not the exception'*.

We are particularly concerned that in the proper desire to enhance public knowledge and participation in archaeology (which is one of our fundamental *raison d'être* as archaeologists) the Southport Group report does not seriously and adversely affect the professional archaeological sector. This may be by inadvertently undermining hard-won professional standards, or through unintended consequences allowing unscrupulous employers or developers to do inferior work 'on the cheap' using volunteer labour. This report after all is concerned with developer-led investigations: we may have moved on from PPG16 and the fundamental tenets embodied in preservation *in-situ*, however that principle is still enshrined in the Valetta Convention and in PPS5 and still underpins



all commercial archaeological work.

The Diggers' Forum believes strongly that *all* intrusive archaeological work should be carried out to professional standards, whether it is part of the planning process or not. It should be *the nature and scope of the required work* (clearly stated in a WSI and approved by curatorial staff), *not the status of the participants*, that sets out the requisite standards to be adhered to for each investigation. It is not a matter of professional versus amateur; it is a matter of *professionalism versus amateurishness* in whatever form it exists. All developer-led work **MUST** be done to the highest professional standards and there must be no excuse not to do so. *Professional-quality work must be the lowest common denominator. No excuses and no exceptions.*

We also wish to express our concern over the reference (3.2.4) that we could perhaps '*do less better*', the report acknowledges that care should be taken with interpreting this phrase, however the DF is concerned at its use as it will be easy to take this out of its qualifying context. In the pre-PPG16 era irrecoverable damage was done due to selective and partial archaeological excavation: rigorous excavation and sampling strategies are essential. If selective strategies *are* going to be applied then there needs to be clear, effective and transparent standards and guidance on a local, regional and national basis. This currently heavily relies on curatorial staff within planning departments drawing on regional and local research frameworks. Alternative gatekeepers *may* be available, but again, we are here concerned with developer-led archaeology and if this recommendation is put in place we will be further relying on strong and effective developer-control archaeologists at a time when they are under most threat.

We are concerned by the expressed aspirations for the commercial sector to involve non-commercial organisations in all areas of heritage management. We are concerned that whilst it is not *intended* to revert to pre-PPG16 excavation using volunteers with insufficient funding or expertise to carry out a professional job, this *may* be a consequence of the recommendations. Professionalism is about working to standards, with affiliation to a suitable professional body such as the IfA or IHBC – via ROs, IfA grades (or similar) and NVQ. Good practice within the historic environment requires *equal standards* to be applied by all participants. We must not open the door to lower quality work.

The IfA policy on volunteering is mentioned in the text, however it is not specifically outlined. The recommendations which relate to the use of unpaid labour (volunteers) must specifically include reference to this document and refer to it on each

occasion. The need for the input of properly validated professional expertise should be emphasised wherever public participation is mentioned.

There is a need for detailed curatorial input through the use of briefs and monitoring to ensure that volunteer, community-led and public participation is appropriate and does not undermine professional practise - particularly on sites where commercial constraints are of paramount importance. The report should also recognise that poor practise leads to the degeneration of the historic environment that we are trying to protect.

We need to openly acknowledge that there are already good examples of public participation on planning-led projects large and small with many community archaeology projects run by commercial units as well as the entire amateur and research excavation sector. Within planning-led archaeological investigations the requirements for community participation should be written into the brief and WSI for each project. We need to accept that developer-funded archaeology is not always the best place for such projects. We also need to acknowledge that there is not a one-size fits all solution to public participation and that many sites will not be suitable for public involvement on-site during archaeological investigation. To acknowledge this, the Southport Group should include an appendix offering explicit guidance as to what they expect from 'participation' from each typical sized project, as this could vary from information on a hoarding to volunteers working on site under professional supervision.

Whilst the current situation is far from ideal and *we are certainly not where we would want to be as a profession*, we have achieved much in the twenty or so years since PPG16 and we should both acknowledge this and protect what is good, whilst looking to move forward. The consultation acts as an opportunity to define what the right direction for the profession should be: if we look at what the report desires it is no more than what is already seen as best practice by many archaeologists and heritage organisations. The recommendations aim to roll out best practice across the industry.

This is admirable but perhaps suggests that we already have the answers, we just lack the environment *to make best practice the best option*. The heritage industry needs to examine the reasons why best practice is not the norm at present and to develop ways of making this the case in the future. Is the Southport Group consultation likely to be able to persuade all stakeholders that this is possible in a development environment that is tougher than ever and a



planning environment where curatorial roles are being eroded and HERs are being shut?

Whilst the recommendations of the Southport Group are presented as a cohesive toolkit in the draft report, it is highly unlikely that the recommendations will be implemented en bloc, especially given the scale of current cuts to HER and curatorial roles which are essential to underpin the aims. It is all very commendable to call for regional archive centres, however in an increasingly unstable funding environment is such a provision realistic? The Southport Report has some very laudable aims which we fully support, however once those aims that cost money are removed, then what are we left with? We need to ensure that if the recommendations are implemented on a piecemeal basis that the overall vision runs through each and every recommendation to prevent unintended consequences from partial implementation.

The Diggers' Forum acknowledges that there are many very capable archaeologists in the non-contracting sector: many of our members started their careers through volunteering and we know many former professional archaeologists who continue to excavate on an amateur basis having left the profession. Our views are not based on protectionism of a flawed and under-funded system, but on the underpinning beliefs we hold about the value of archaeology and its importance. Volunteers do have a place on site, and can do valuable and high quality work, but this needs to be within a proper professionally recognised and accredited system with high quality curatorial oversight and properly funded resource centres. This is what archaeology and our heritage deserve.

The Diggers' Forum would welcome inclusion in any future consultations at the earliest opportunity. We represent those archaeologists who work out on site and we can bring their experience and views to the table. It is our members who see the reality of the policies created at higher levels, and who deal with the benefits, flaws and loopholes on a daily basis.

We will be replying to the consultation with a set of detailed recommendations once we have canvassed the opinion of our members. Our initial recommendations are:

That the employers, trade unions and professional organisations urgently meet to resolve the ongoing crisis in archaeological pay and careers.

We call for urgent clarification of the meaning and scope of the phrase 'public participation should be

the norm not the exception'.

That public participation in planning-led archaeology is governed by professional standards and guidance and that standards are applied equally to all participants. There must be no negative effect on standards of work as a result of more inclusive participation.

That public participation in planning-led archaeology is not won at the risk of any negative impacts on archaeological pay and conditions which are already at levels that threaten the viability of the profession. Public participation should be at a level appropriate to the site.

That the Southport Group summarise the IFA standards on volunteering as an additional recommendation and that all recommendations are augmented by the appropriate professional guidance and codes of conduct and that these remain linked.

That professional pay reflects the extra responsibilities in mentoring voluntary participation: archaeologists' and supervisors' wages will be increased to reflect the extra responsibilities and skills required to mentor untrained staff and structured training programmes to be provided for this extra responsibility.

That changes to the structure or practice of the profession are not put in place without properly funded and tested checks and balances already being in position.

Please send us any comments, preferably in the form of clear recommendations, by May 30th to diggers@archaeologists.net so we can get your opinions in to the Southport Group.

Thankyou,

The Diggers' Forum Committee



Get up, Stand up. Fight for Diggers' Rights!

Jez Taylor and Chris Clarke were instrumental in setting up the Diggers' Forum in 2004, they are now stepping down from the frontline: we ask them about their time fighting for Diggers' rights

What is your background?

Jez: I've been working as a field-archaeologist since completing a Manpower Services Commission (MSC) Training scheme in Southampton in 1987. I've been living and working in London since '93. When we re-started the DF in 2005 I was doing the same job as now – supervising and writing-up sites for MOLA.

Chris: I was very lucky to land a permanent contract with AOC Archaeology a year or so after I started digging with them in 2000, I'm now a Project Supervisor there. At the time we got the DF going I was an experienced digger who was rapidly realising that archaeology was an industry with significant flaws that did not present many realistic opportunities for a 'normal' career, yet I had the optimism that things could change.

Where did the idea for the DF come from? How did you get it started? Who was involved?

Jez: I was on the IfA Council between 2002–2008. Some time way before then, IfA members had tried to set up a group for field-archaeologists called the Diggers' Forum. For whatever reason, the group foundered before properly taking off. I was asked if I would like to resurrect the group. Myself and two other Diggers – Chris Clarke and Paul Everill started the group afresh.

How do you feel about being within the IfA, its not an organisation renowned for its dynamism and there's a lot of distrust of the IfA out on the sites. A lot of people may mistrust the DF because it is an IfA group, what would you say to them?

Jez: The IfA frustrates me at times, but having been on the inside I understand some of the constraints that hold back progress in some areas relating to field-archaeology. The IfA has built-up a good infrastructure and has a wide reach within the profession. It feels more useful trying to make progress within the Institute than standing on the

sidelines. The DF was set-up by field-archaeologists to represent the best interests of field-archaeologists. That is our only agenda and if it conflicts with IfA policy we'll oppose IfA policy.

Weight of numbers would suggest that site workers should be able to get things changed for the better in a democratic Institute, why do you think this doesn't happen?

Jez: It doesn't happen because there are not enough Diggers actively involved within the Institute, though there's many field-staff who are members. I cannot stress enough how important it is to get more field-archaeologists voted onto IfA Council.

Chris: If every field staff member within the IfA actually made the effort to return their voting form then they would get the candidates who best represented their own views. Its all about using the systems which are already in place and crying out to be used. If you don't vote then you don't have any right to moan that the IfA isn't representing your best interests

You've both been on the IfA Council, what's it like?

Chris: The most impressive thing was that being a Digger on Council my voice was equally important as that of a unit manager or county archaeologist. Your ideas and opinion count and are sort after on Council.

Jez: At times I felt that a small group of us within the Council were struggling against a majority with a different set of priorities. Not that people didn't care, but many of my IfA colleagues worked in different sectors and had different concerns. This is why we need more field-archaeologists taking part.

There's a lot of passion in archaeology, but also a lot of apathy. Did you sometimes feel that you were getting nowhere and that no-one cared?

Chris: Almost everyone is happy to moan at length about how pay and conditions are crap in archaeology, but very few of them are willing to get off the arses and do anything about it. Some would say we get the industry we deserve....and right now they're not too far wrong. But I have learnt most people need some sort of positive motivational force to get them involved, and that's what we've been doing with the DF. We want to show Diggers that there are reasons to be hopeful, and that we are taking steps in the right direction.

Jez: Yes, I did sometimes feel that we were getting nowhere. I never felt that *no-one* cared; I certainly felt that *some* didn't.

What is your proudest achievement with the DF? And what has been your biggest frustration?

Jez: I was very proud of the campaign posters we produced for our Campaign for a Living Wage in 2007(in conjunction with IfA, BAJR and Prospect). My biggest frustration was the piss-poor response from the considerable number of organisations and individuals who received them.



Jez Taylor

Chris: Picking one specific DF achievement is difficult. I'm just proud that the DF has been able to consistently chip away at the issue of pay and conditions within the industry over the past six years and make meaningful advances. The biggest frustration is a general lack of awareness of who the DF are and what we do.

What are the most common misconceptions about the DF?

Chris: I think its who the DF actually represents. To truly judge an industry you must first understand how it treats its most junior members. To join the DF, whether you are a digger, consultant, curator, or manager, is to show your support not just for diggers, but for improvement within the industry as a whole.

Jez: I guess that our existence is just a box-ticking exercise for the IfA!

What do you think the DF can actually achieve? And do you think this is realistic if diggers don't get involved?

Jez: There's now a new, bigger group of people running the DF. If we can keep-up numbers on our committee with more people regularly coming on board, keeping things fresh, then we'll grow and increase our output as a group representing Diggers' interests. I think we can help improve pay, conditions, career structure etc, particularly working alongside BAJR, Prospect, Rescue and other organisations seeking to improve the framework in which we work.

Chris: With initiatives like the travel survey the DF can push for better conditions and ultimately make

recommendations of what staff should be asking for. With a greater awareness of CPD and the training options available the DF can give diggers a greater sense of empowerment by showing them how to develop the career they want and seek out better employment opportunities.



Chris Clarke

The ultimate goal of course is increasing wages for all archaeologists. The DF may not be able to do this single handedly, but it knows where to apply the pressure, and it can help the industry get to a point where archaeologists are paid a sum that is truly representative of their skills and experience, on a par to other specialised industries they work along side....the fabled Living Wage. None of this is possible if diggers don't get involved. Who is going to support them if they don't even make the effort to support themselves? The DF can only go so far on their behalf. Diggers have to provide the critical mass to allow the biggest changes to come to fruition.

Where should the DF be concentrating its energies over the next few years? What areas could pay dividends?

Jez: So many areas! For me the number one priority is pay. I fear it's going to be a long haul, but current pay levels for field-staff are still appalling. It's crucial we fight for improvements, not just for ourselves, but for the profession as a whole. In the shorter term we can work towards improving working-away allowances, encouraging union membership, training/career progression, health and safety on site and many other issues.

Chris: The greatest achievements can occur if the DF selects smaller issues within the subject of pay and conditions as a whole. By collecting data and applying pressure relating to this one issue change can be realistic.

If you could get readers to do one thing to improve the archaeological profession, what would it be?

Jez: Get involved with the IfA, Diggers' Forum, BAJR, unions, Rescue or anyone else trying to improve our lot. I like a good rant down the pub as much as the next person, but on its own it achieves nothing.



Chris: Don't think someone else is going to do it for you, because they won't. Without numbers on their side the progress that anybody can make is slow, but if you are willing to invest a little of your hard earned cash to support these guys you can speed up the rate of progress that bit more.

And if you don't think the body you've joined is doing a good job or is focussing on the wrong thing then tell them! If the whole industry were to stand up and shout, I think suddenly a lot of important people would start paying much closer attention.

So, you're both stepping down after 6 years, what will you do with your spare time?

Jez: No spare time!

Chris: My next mission is to get the Prospect Archaeology Branch back on its feet.

Archaeologists deserve a strong Trade Union, someone to stand up for their working rights, fight for higher pay levels, and demand fair treatment from employers.



Standing up and standing together

One of the best things about the response to the travel and away work survey has been the number of you who have said that you may be prepared to help in some way with the DF. This means a great deal as the DF can only function if it has an active membership who are prepared to help out occasionally. The interview with Jez and Chris shows how much has been carried on the shoulders of just a few individuals, but with a little bit of help from a wider group of members the responsibilities can be shared and more progress can be made.

As we have said elsewhere in this issue you can **all** help out in any number of small ways: you can tell us what you like or dislike about this newsletter, write an article, review or opinion piece, tell us the issues you would like us to campaign on. You can also tell us about news of what is happening out on site and of good and bad practice you have seen -with a promise of anonymity if you want- and you can help circulate Diggers' Forum flyers, newsletters and posters.

If you feel you may be able to give a little bit more time we have regular Committee meetings to which members can come along. If you want to get involved on a semi-serious level it's a good way to meet the current faces, see how it all works and see whether you have something to offer to the DF. We always have room for new committee members, you'll need to be elected at the next AGM, but you can start getting involved now.

We also want more diggers to stand for election to the IfA Council -we currently have three elected members and one co-opted member on council. These members give site workers a direct say in the decisions of the IfA. If you think you might like to stand then please get in touch and we can give you the low-down on what being on Council involves and what it means. If you do decide to stand we can then offer support and advice. Every member of Council stands and speaks as an individual -whether they are a unit boss or an archaeologist, but we will support candidates who share our vision.

We want to support candidates who share our commitment to a viable and sustainable career

for all archaeologists. We are intending to publish a pre-election special where we ask all those standing for office exactly where they stand on the issues that directly affect field staff. You can then all make up your own minds as to who to support. And remember to use your vote, it does make a difference, with over 360 members we can back the right candidates and help them get elected.

Diggers' Forum Outreach -your opinions wanted

Want to get involved in making a difference? Want to give others the benefit of your experience? You could help with a plan to take the Diggers' Forum into universities across the country. For a while we have been discussing ways of reaching the next generation of archaeologists -those currently studying at university and college- and giving them the lowdown on the realities of an archaeological career.

Our plan is to create a standardised presentation that can be delivered to undergraduate archaeologists at an annual seminar. We want to see how many of **YOU** would be willing to adopt a local university and give a personalised version of that presentation and answer questions afterwards. Depending on your response we can start developing better links with universities, produce a standard presentation and start educating the next crop of archaeologists before it is too late.

Several universities already have events such as Archaeology Career Fairs or bring in professional archaeologists to talk about the professional world. We want to participate in, or complement, these events and present a detailed no-nonsense guide to how to prepare for (or avoid) professional archaeology. What courses to take, what fieldwork to do, and what the reality of commercial work is really like. The wages, the work, the ways up and the ways out.

If you're interested in putting something back then get in touch with us at diggers@archaeologists.net saying where you live and work, and whether you have any connections or affiliations with any particular university.



From the finds tray

Each issue we team up with colleagues in the IfA Finds Group to bring you an insight into the work they do with the artefacts that we excavate. In this article Nicky Rogers talks about her job as a finds specialist at York Archaeological Trust.

I have been an artefact researcher studying small finds at **York Archaeological Trust (YAT)**

since 1988. After working as a digger during my gap year - on sites including the Viking Dig at Coppergate here in York - I went to Southampton University and got a degree in Archaeology and History. At this point, I already knew that I was more interested in objects than stratigraphy, and while working for the Oxford Archaeological Unit as a Finds Assistant, I applied to Leicester University to study their post graduate Museum Studies course - my third attempt proved successful!

Unfortunately I was less successful at getting a museum job, so I returned to the Oxford Unit, where while working on site, I was offered the chance to write publication reports on small finds from two excavations I had taken part in; these probably proved crucial in gaining my appointment at YAT as a finds research assistant a short time later.

My job involves looking at all the small finds or individual objects that arise from YAT excavations – and also some from external

clients. After the finds have been brought off site and recorded onto our database, they come to me for identification, many via the Conservation Laboratory.

In the lab, all the iron and copper alloy objects are X-rayed, and any finds recovered wet are gradually dried out before I look at and identify them. If further conservation work is required in order to identify objects -for example, removing corrosion to reveal construction details or other features- then this is highlighted for a future stage of work. Once I have identified the objects I will then compile an assessment report which notes what the objects are, what they may tell us about the site they are from, any useful dating evidence they provide, and whether further research work on them is recommended.



Antler comb from Hungate ©YAT

Being in York, many of the objects that I see date from the Viking period, this antler comb (SF9813) found on our current excavations at Hungate in the city is a good example. Although it probably dates to the 9th-10th centuries, it was actually found in a post medieval cellar deposit, so it is obviously residual. We know it dates to the Viking period from looking at other examples that we have found previously in York, particularly at Coppergate. As the image shows, the comb is not complete, and was recovered in several fragments which were reassembled in the Conservation Lab.



Conservation Lab. Composite combs such as this were made of antler or bone, and we are fortunate that one of our conservators is able to tell the difference, and confirmed that this one is made of antler.



Antler waste from Hungate ©YAT

We know a great deal about the manufacture of these combs, because as well as the finished products, we have also recovered a great deal of the antler working debris discarded by the craftsmen on site. This debris is all related to making combs, as antler was used almost exclusively for this purpose: it is clear that in the Viking period people would deliberately go every spring into the local forests and recover the antlers which had been shed by the red deer there for the comb makers. The debris in the photograph all came from the same pit fill, but is just part of the antler material recovered from that context - although we have yet to fully analyse all this material, the amounts recovered and the range of types of offcuts within this debris indicate

that comb making must surely have been going on here, rather than the material simply being dumped here. So, it is quite likely that the comb was itself made at Hungate.

Working on small finds can be fascinating and very rewarding, although for every lovely comb that I may see, there will be tens of iron nails to labouriously identify and record. I very much enjoy my job, and would recommend it, but I'm aware that getting any jobs in the archaeological field these days is difficult, as it was when I was starting out.

Getting experience handling finds and becoming familiar with the range of materials they are made from is obviously important, so helping with the processing of finds on site is a very good start. It may also be worth considering trying to develop a specialism in a particular type of object -if you look at excavation reports, it is clear that in many instances a range of archaeological specialists has been used, all of whom have their own particular field of expertise. I was lucky enough to do most of my learning on the job and do not have a post graduate archaeological qualification, but these days this is almost certainly going to be expected of anyone seeking to become a researcher.

Nicky Rogers

The Finds Research Group

<http://sites.google.com/site/frg7001700/>

The Finds Research Group is a forum for people interested in or researching artefacts of the Anglo-Saxon, Viking, medieval and post-medieval periods. The main activities of FRG include themed Day conferences held twice a year and the production of information sheets on different types of objects (Datasheets).

One of the Finds Research Group's key outputs is its Datasheets series. Datasheets are short contributions devoted to particular areas of portable material culture. One of their essential characteristics is their freshness; they aim to communicate the results of ongoing and leading-edge work, so that new ideas can be circulated quickly.

The FRG provides a means by which specialists, finds workers, museum professionals and other interested persons can communicate and discuss topics relevant to the subject of finds identification and interpretation.

Membership of the Finds Research Group is open to all interested in the finds of the period. At present they have members from across the UK, Europe, and beyond.



Survey of away work: Vehicle insurance and work

Chiz Harward

The DF survey of away work and travel has now closed, we'd like to thank everyone who took part. We know it was a long survey, but many of you struggled through to the end. It was the first such survey any of us had designed, and we learnt a lot in the process.

We are now writing to the archaeological employers and it is their turn to provide the data and opinions. Once completed we will analyse the data and publish the results, hopefully in time to present before the next IfA minima meeting in November!

From the raw data so far we can see several patterns emerging, and we'll try and deal with these in our report.

One issue that we can quickly address is **car insurance**: there were a worrying number of respondents who simply didn't know whether their cars were correctly insured or not. This would appear to relate to the use of private cars for work use. The following is intended as a quick summary, but as with everything to do with insurance make sure you are covered for exactly what you do. Speak to your broker and find out exactly what cover you need.

We spoke to insurance providers about the three most common scenarios of Diggers driving to work. Some of you aren't going to like what we say here, especially if you are effectively currently driving uninsured, but it's better that you know the score than not. After all, if something bad happens then pleading ignorance isn't going to work with *either* the police *or* your insurance company.

- **I drive to the same office every day in my car and then take a works vehicle to site.**

Most private car insurance will allow you to drive to a single fixed place of work (sometimes called

Social, Domestic and Pleasure (SD&P) including Commuting). This should be clearly stated on your Policy Summary, so the first thing is to check that you are covered to just drive to the office and back each day as some insurance specifically excludes driving to work or even dropping someone else off at work! Check that you are also covered for any **colleagues** you pick up on the way, especially if you accept any reward from them as you *may* need business insurance.

- **Sometimes I drive myself straight to site if it is quicker than going to the office first. I occasionally give colleagues a lift too, but I don't get paid for this by my employer.**

If you use your car to get to more than one work location such as driving to different sites or offices you will **usually** need to get additional insurance to cover this. The standard extra is often known as **Class 1 Business cover** and covers the regular driver and their spouse (but does not cover other named drivers for business use: for that you will need **Business Class 2**).

You will probably be covered for taking passengers, but check with the insurer. Even if you only get a few quid of petrol money off your mates then *some* insurers may say that you are getting a reward for driving and will need specific cover for this, again check with the insurer.

- **I sometimes have to use my car as a work vehicle carrying passengers, tools and finds etc, my employer may or may not pay mileage.**

If you use your vehicle as a works car/van or even just to visit the local records office then you will need **business insurance**. This will need to be Class 1 or Class 2 depending on who is driving. Your employer should also be taking copies of your insurance and satisfying themselves that you are properly insured. Also make sure that the mileage rate covers the extra cost of the insurance as that is exactly what it is for!

If in doubt always check exactly what you are covered for, and shop around to get the right cover at the best price. You may also want to check whether you want to increase your cover if you are covering passengers and their belongings.

Bookmarks

search for a site using its postcode, street address, by a town name, or just pan and zoom.

Like most web-based maps you can view either satellite, road map images, or both with the geology mapping is shown as a partially transparent layer over the satellite/road mapping, the viewer only shows the geology at the surface -if there are superficial deposits overlying the bedrock it will only show the superficial layers, but if you select a location a pop-up window will tell you both the bedrock and any superficial deposits. When viewing the 1:50,000 scale geology maps a key is available to the geology.



Screengrab of BGS geology viewer

Principles of Archaeological Stratigraphy

Finally, something a bit different: Dr Edward Harris has put a digital version of his seminal book **Principles of Archaeological Stratigraphy** on the web to download for free at

<http://www.harrismatrix.com/index.html>. You can also download the follow up **Practices in Archaeological Stratigraphy** which contains a range of papers on the application of his principles. All Dr Harris asks is that you write him an email to explain why you want the download.

Principles in Archaeological Stratigraphy outlines the theory that underpinned the stratigraphic revolution in archaeological recording and allowed the development of techniques such as Single Context Planning.

If you have found (or created) a website that is really useful, then please let us know so we can share it with everyone

Chiz Harward

Each issue we will bring you a selection of useful web resources to bookmark, in this issue we've got two links that will help everyone sent out on those small jobs where every second counts: a page that will find nearby OS benchmarks, and a geology viewer, plus a free download of one of the most important books in modern archaeology.

Ordnance Survey Benchmark Locator

<http://benchmarks.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/pls/htmldb/f?p=111:3:2267970229572400295::NO:3::>

Ironically the Ordnance Survey website can be rather difficult to navigate around, however amongst the treasures hidden away is this handy page where you can search for all OS benchmarks within a 1km square. You'll need to know the 100km square letters (eg TQ) and the four figure grid ref for your area but just enter that (eg TQ3456) and you'll get a list of all the benchmarks in that square kilometre, along with their heights, order of accuracy and exact location in both a 8 fig grid reference and what aspect the benchmark faces. The results can also be downloaded in csv format so you can import them into a database or GIS.

Of course as the vast majority of benchmarks are no longer maintained there is no guarantee that the benchmark will be accurate or will even still be there, but at least you will know where to look, and what height it is when you find it!

BGS Geology of Britain viewer

http://maps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyviewer_google/googleviewer.html

The British Geological Survey's geology viewer will be of use to everyone who needs to find out what the geology is on and around a site but who doesn't have access to the full size Survey Sheets. You can



Tools of the trade:

The kneeler

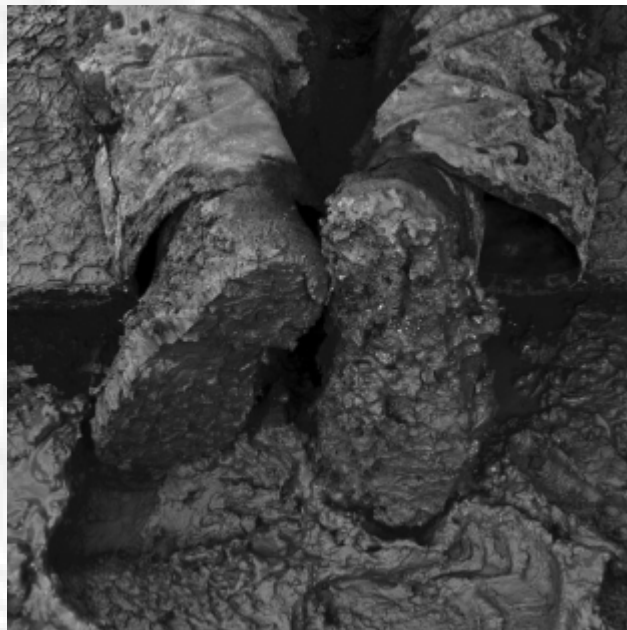
Much maligned by the more 'macho' elements in archaeology, the kneeler is in fact one of the keys to a long and happy career in archaeology. Dodgy knees and bad backs are seen by too many as an unavoidable occupational hazard for archaeologists, but they don't have to be with a little self-discipline and a small piece of foam.

Lets be honest, whilst a bit of dirt and mud may be seen as **digger-chic** by some, there is *nothing* attractive about having shagged knees -unable to walk down a steep hill, or pick up a dropped coin without wincing.

Since most of us won't actually be archaeologists for all our lives (sorry, but its true) so why should we leave archaeology with shattered knees as well as a shattered bank balance? *We need* our knees for so much more than just for trowelling so why let archaeology ruin them? And if you are 'In It For Life', then you will need your knees all the more, so why let them fall apart?

As a profession we need to wake up to the fact that knees and backs do matter, and we should start taking simple steps to make life better. Using a kneeler throughout our careers as archaeologists can only help to reduce damage to our knees. They are not just for wusses, they are a cheap and effective piece of PPE!

The humble kneeler only costs your employer a few quid and a decent one will last for a fair while even on the typical British Summer excavation (see picture!). The kneeler will protect your knees from the damp, the mud, the cold and from pointy stones, but a kneeler can also protect the archaeology from being compacted, especially if the context is soft and squidgy. You can also sit on a kneeler to stop yourself getting piles whilst drawing a section.



photograph © Dave Webb

Mmmm, squelchy

Kneelers come in a whole host of attractive designs, all of which will be caked in mud and invisible within hours, at the end of the day the ones with an outer plastic cover should generally be avoided as it will split within hours, just make sure you get a strong solid kneeler made of sturdy and durable foam.

More expensive than the simple foam kneeler are **knee-pads**, these can sometimes be fitted into special pockets on work trousers, or are attached by elasticated straps. These straps never *quite* hold the kneepad in place and either cut off the blood supply to your lower legs, or leave the pads dangling uselessly every time you get up and walk to the site hut. Afficionados of knee pads swear by them, delighting in the multitude of velcro straps and gel inserts, and laugh at kneeler-users as they chase their errant kneelers across site on windy days. Meanwhile the disciples of the simple kneeler point out that a stone caught behind a knee pad is absolutely excruciating, that they take ages to get comfortable and can't cope with the squalour of archaeological sites.

Whatever your choice of protection, start using kneelers or kneepads from the **start** of your archaeological career rather than only when it is too late (like me). Make sure that your next site has a full set of kneelers and save us all from both ourselves and from 'Archaeologists' Knee'.



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