**SESSION W3.1 THE SKILLS GAP: TRAINING FOR COMPETENCE IN ARCHAEOLOGY**

Organisers: Samantha Boyle, Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives, and Kelly Madigan, L-P Archaeology

**SESSION ABSTRACT**  Diggers Forum (DF) takes forward the proposal that the level of competence of every professional archaeologist shall be Practitioner or above: any archaeologist in the profession who is not working at PCIfA level competence must be working within a structured training programme provided by their employer to take them to at least PCIfA level competence. DF believes in increasing the value of the archaeologist across the profession. Employer, employee, organisation and volunteer must be equally invested in the value of training, skills and best practice. Higher demonstrable competency is beneficial to the profession as a whole. DF invites discussants from vocational, academic, commercial and voluntary sectors to consider the proposal and the implications for future training. The session will begin with papers from each sector summarising current training challenges, opportunities and some horizon scanning. The second part of the session will comprise a series of training examples presented by DF who invite all archaeology practitioners and volunteers to training experiences to be included in our case studies – the good, the bad and the ugly. The discussion which follows will allow open debate on the policy’s effects and how it can (or cannot) be used to strengthen the profession.

**ABSTRACTS**

Vocational training within the commercial environment: the trainee scheme at MOLA Leo Thomas, Museum of London Archaeology

Vocational and employment-based training can provide a better grounding in archaeological field skills than most degree courses. The MOLA trainee scheme was specifically intended to provide an entry route into our profession for non-graduates of archaeology. Central to the scheme was the completion of the NVQ in Archaeological Practice, a vocational qualification that additionally provides evidence of the PCIfA level of competence. Fieldwork training is the primary element of the MOLA scheme, and the intention has always been to enable the trainees to leave the programme sufficiently experienced in field archaeology to gain employment within the sector. Leo Thomas will outline the main principles behind the trainee scheme. With Leo will be one of the trainees, who will explain why the scheme was attractive to them, what they gained from the experience and how their career plans have worked out since they graduated (in March 2016).

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AL76pvI-KKw&index=1&list=PLBjeGwwG0rtQaCMDFTbd-Rh9T3-XNEd5Y>

Wet Wet Wet – Maritime archaeology skills training Mark Beattie-Edwards, Nautical Archaeology Society

In 1986 the Nautical Archaeology Society pioneered a training scheme in nautical archaeology. Coming out of the Mary Rose excavation (which ended in 1982) when the majority of the “diggers” were volunteer amateur SCUBA divers, the scheme initially concentrated on skilling up a workforce of recreational divers to assist with underwater archaeological projects around the country. Thirty years on, the NAS Education Programme has evolved into a different animal, now looking to provide opportunities for everyone to participate in archaeology – whether that participation is in the archives, at a desk, working underwater or on the foreshore. Whilst participation underpins the NAS ethos of “protection via public education” the structured Education Programme has also tried to support the professional archaeology sector by highlighting how the skills and knowledge acquired via its courses support the National Occupation Standards for Archaeological Practice and the requirements of the NVQ in Archaeological Practice. This paper will highlight what the NAS Education Programme incorporates, how it is designed and delivered and will truthfully point out issues, limitations and shortfalls in an education programme that in England receives no financial support.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3lF9r5ble_w&list=PLBjeGwwG0rtQaCMDFTbd-Rh9T3-XNEd5Y&index=2>

Embedding practitioner skills in undergraduate learning and teaching James Morris and Rick Peterson Archaeology, University of Central Lancashire

This paper will review our experiences of teaching archaeology at University of Central Lancashire (UCLan) and the measures we have taken to align academic learning and teaching with professional practice. It is our view that single honours archaeology graduates should be capable of working at PCIfA level by the time they leave University. To support this aspiration we have structured degrees around modules which develop undergraduates’ field education from novice to trainee supervisor. Learning outcomes are closely aligned to CIfA guidelines and the National Occupational Standards, with fieldwork an important element in its own right. Key to this approach is the weekly assessment of students fieldwork skills – aligned to PCIFA competencies. Learning is also underpinned by a close working relationship with professional organisations. We use their procedures, pro-forma sheets and document templates during teaching and students regularly get to work alongside professionals. More than 80% of our academic staff are MCIfA, most have significant amounts of commercial work experience and 50% have worked at project officer level or above. It is often argued that universities have a responsibility to give students a broad education, as the majority of archaeology graduates do not seek a career in archaeology. However, we have found that embedding practitioner skills is fundamental to producing well rounded graduates. Students value the transferable skills they learn in the process, whatever their future career plans.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJKnKRJqAcQ&list=PLBjeGwwG0rtQaCMDFTbd-Rh9T3-XNEd5Y&index=3>

Training the next generation of archaeologists: how a smaller company can do it and why we should Natasha Powers, Allen Archaeology Ltd

Formal training is perhaps seen as the preserve of the larger, more established archaeological unit able to put considerable resources into training schemes and have staff specifically dedicated to implementing them. However, working for a smaller unit can provide better opportunities for consistent mentoring and for a diverse training experience. Faced with difficulties in recruiting experienced staff and the desire to encourage the next generation of archaeologists, Allen Archaeology Ltd devised a three month training scheme aimed at getting individuals to PCIfA equivalent skills levels. This paper will outline what we do, the rationale behind it and the issues we have encountered putting it into practice. It will include the thoughts of some of our recent trainees themselves and will provide the opportunity to discuss why a small scheme in a less well-known company, originally aimed at local graduates, has had applications from individuals with a wide variety of skills levels from both the UK and mainland Europe.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Y3wcXaubE_Q&list=PLBjeGwwG0rtQaCMDFTbd-Rh9T3-XNEd5Y&index=4>