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## Code of conduct: the ethical guide to public life

Submitted by [Ed Ardill](#) on Wednesday 07 August 2019

In the second instalment of my three blogs, I want to touch upon ethics.

As with many professional bodies, the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists has a code of conduct that determines the way all accredited and CifA act and uphold professionalism within archaeology.

When I first read the code of conduct, I was expecting your standard 'do not do this or do not do that' list of rules and frankly I saw it as more information I had to keep logged in my head. However, when I began my research projects and going to various meetings, I started seeing the importance of the code of conduct. Once I put my Philosophy hat on and after having various talks with members of staff, it really became clear to me why having the code of conduct is vital, not only to ensure that CifA members and the institute behave accordingly but also when it comes to CifA's main aim- which is to serve and protect the public- it really does that.

The fifth principle of the code of conduct is what really caught my eye. In summary, the principle requires that members recognise the aspirations of employers, employees, colleagues and volunteers in matters that concern employment. Within this principle you have section 5.7 which states 'A member shall have due regard to the rights of individuals who wish to join or belong to a trade union, professional or trade association'. The importance of freedom and individuality within paid employment is hugely understated. Yes, there are laws that protect people within society, but many do not realise that this does not always translate to paid employment. The ongoing struggle between Amazon and its employees, who want to unionize so they can have better working rights, is a clear example of where autonomy is unjustly restricted. For CifA to recognise the importance of autonomy and individuality not only means that within archaeology, members are able to work with the utmost respect towards each other but when it comes to interactions with the public, they are able to apply that same principle in their everyday interactions.

The other principle that stood out to me was in section 4.7 and in summary it states that a member should not take on any work that stops them from including their own interpretations in the final report or any work that means they





will be unable to use any data after they finish the project. The strive for transparency, honesty and credibility is something that shocked me at first. These are values that you would find being pushed in sectors such as politics, law or health care but archaeology would have never been on my list. Not only is this refreshing to see but this in my opinion puts ClfA high above other sectors such as politics, where you would expect this push towards transparency and credibility- but where these values can be disregarded, damaging public confidence. By barring accredited archaeologists from undertaking work that does not benefit the public, duty is placed on these archaeologists to ensure that work not done for public benefit is not supported.

These two principles, for me as someone who has no background in heritage, really show the work and push for professionalism and the protection of the public that runs through ClfA's message. The value of individual autonomy and honesty within archaeological work is commendable and as I stated earlier, something you would expect to see in other sectors but don't. In my opinion this value and ethical standard that ClfA requires its accredited members to have before they become accredited and after they join something that should be celebrated.

Whilst ClfA aims to show the value that archaeology and archaeologists have within society, through the knowledge and physical connection that can be gained through archaeological activities, finds and studies, it is also important to promote the value that archaeologists themselves add to society. That cannot be lost. The integrity and accountability that ClfA accredited archaeologists display by holding themselves accountable to the code of conduct is something that can promote archaeology even further. The reality of the code of conduct is that it's not just another set of rules, but a framework that not only allows individuals to grow as a professional in their area of work but as a person too which is a huge benefit.

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