

A career in your hands

CIfA is a network of thousands of professional archaeologists working together for high standards and great careers. We can help you plan your future and build your skills so that you stand out to employers and have a successful and fulfilling career!

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About a career in archaeology



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My job is at a university,

training future archaeologists in archaeological practice and techniques such as surveying and geophysics, as well as instilling a passion for cultural heritage. I also work on TV shows about archaeology including *Digging for Britain*. **Archaeology is about inspiring others to love their history and take pride in landscapes and buildings, and I am proud to be a part of the archaeological discipline.**

Stuart Prior, Reader in Archaeological Practice

What do archaeologists do?

Archaeologists study the past through its physical remains. Those remains – whether built, buried, on land or underwater, extraordinary or everyday, magnificent or mundane – have meaning and value for people.

Archaeologists are skilled professionals who study these remains, care for the historic environment and share a new understanding of the past.

There are many different specialisms in archaeology – it's not just digging!

Why choose a career in archaeology?

Archaeology is exciting because there are so many different career opportunities within it. It's a global profession that crosses borders and disciplines. Careers in archaeology span a wide variety of workplaces in the public, private and third sectors, and could be in excavation, research, museums, national parks, universities, media and local government.

Many archaeologists in the UK work within the planning system that controls the development of land and buildings. This means they are needed at all levels to plan, manage and carry out archaeological work as part of construction and big infrastructure projects like roads, railways and pipelines. They are also needed to look after, interpret and present the evidence that is found during excavations, so that people can know about what happened in the past.

Working in archaeology can help you develop a wide range of versatile skills that employers find attractive – from project management, IT, teamwork, communication and problem solving, to the ability to be creative, analytical and innovative.

There are other job roles which are also essential to the archaeology sector. These include office or logistics managers, finance officers, training and education officers, graphic designers, communications and PR, and more.

Take a look at the job profiles in this leaflet and imagine how you can combine your career interests with a job in archaeology.

'A career in archaeology could lead you anywhere!'



© Wessex Archaeology

Archaeology is made up of a wide range of specialisms, so there is plenty of opportunity to find a role you love.



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I'm a principal archaeologist

working on major infrastructure projects like roads, railways, cable routes and wind farms. My primary role is designing the archaeological works – where we dig the trenches and deciding the scientific questions we want to answer. **I love this diverse, dynamic environment.** I can be working with a mechanical digger, establishing the correct dig depth, or upstairs in the office with the construction team discussing a huge project, then back in a trench. Every day is different!

Emma Tetlow, Senior Archaeological Consultant



© Emma Tetlow



I studied archaeology

at university and then went on to an employer trainee scheme to build on the practical and theoretical skills I gained during my degree. I now work as a field archaeologist on a mix of rural and urban sites. **Archaeology is not only digging:** there are lots of branches you can look to move into, like studying the results of fieldwork, geophysics, illustration, archives, or public outreach.

Tabitha Gulliver Lawrence, Field Archaeologist



How do I become an archaeologist?

There are several ways to train to work in archaeology in the UK.

University degree

A university degree is a well-established career entry route into archaeology. Universities offer a wide range of undergraduate and postgraduate archaeology degrees. This gives you the chance to choose a course which really suits you.

An increasing number of archaeology degree courses are now accredited by Cifa, which means they are recognised by archaeology's leading professional body. These accredited degrees include opportunities for you to develop the practical and professional skills you will need for a career in archaeology, and they embed professional standards into their teaching.

Accredited degree programmes will be clearly advertised on a university's website; you can recognise them by the 'Cifa & UAUK accredited degree' logo.



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Apprenticeship or vocational qualification

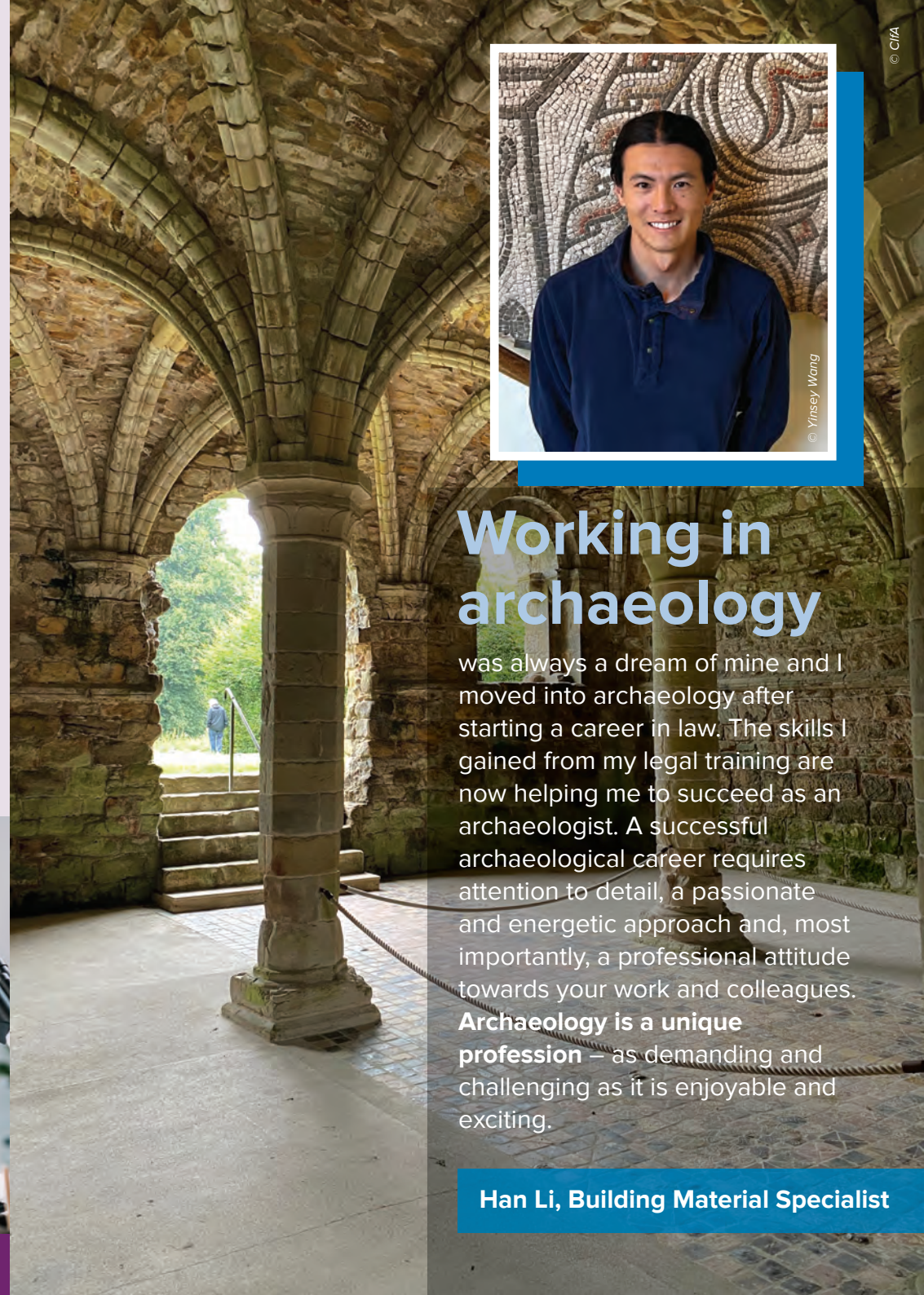
If you'd prefer to head straight into the world of work, consider an apprenticeship or vocational qualification.

Apprenticeships allow you to earn while you learn, get real work experience and achieve a high-profile qualification at the end. Completing an apprenticeship will give you the practical skills you need to apply for a job in archaeology and the confidence to succeed. This is because as an apprentice, you do much more than study subject knowledge (although that's a key part of the programme). You'll gain credit not just for what you do, but how you do it, by proving you can apply the skills and behaviours to succeed in the job – and that's very attractive to future employers.

Vocational qualifications are like apprenticeships but may be more flexible as they do not have to be completed within a set timeframe. They are usually delivered in the workplace and you are assessed on how you carry out workplace tasks. An assessor will observe you undertaking tasks, such as excavation, to confirm that you can complete that job to the right standard. There's a strong focus on workplace performance, complemented by the knowledge and understanding to support it. Some employers offer workplace placements specifically designed to deliver a vocational qualification.

Employer training scheme

Some employers offer formal training programmes as a way to get into archaeology. These provide structured 'on-the-job' training aimed at early-career archaeologists. Some are designed as graduate training programmes to bridge the gap between the skills learnt at university and those required in the workplace, but others are specifically aimed at non-graduates. They include training on practical, professional and ethical working practices and may be linked to a formal qualification such as an NVQ, or to Practitioner-level professional accreditation with CfA.



© Yinsey Wang

Working in archaeology

was always a dream of mine and I moved into archaeology after starting a career in law. The skills I gained from my legal training are now helping me to succeed as an archaeologist. A successful archaeological career requires attention to detail, a passionate and energetic approach and, most importantly, a professional attitude towards your work and colleagues. **Archaeology is a unique profession** – as demanding and challenging as it is enjoyable and exciting.

Han Li, Building Material Specialist

ClfA is here for you at every stage of your career journey!

ClfA – the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists – is the leading professional body for archaeologists in the UK and overseas.

If you're thinking about a career in archaeology, you can join ClfA as a Student or Affiliate member and get access to our regular publications, training and networking opportunities.

ClfA also has three grades of professional accreditation – Practitioner, Associate and Member. These are stepping-stones on your career pathway in archaeology. ClfA accreditation is awarded to archaeologists who have been assessed for their skills and competence, and who agree to uphold the values of the Institute. When you graduate or complete an apprenticeship, vocational qualification or employer training scheme you can use the skills and experience you've gained to apply for professional accreditation with ClfA.

You can use your ClfA designation after your name to indicate that your competence has been assessed by ClfA, and that you will comply with our *Code of conduct* and Standards.



Student or Affiliate – getting started:

if you're enrolled on an appropriate course¹ or if you're interested in a career in archaeology, join us as a non-accredited Student or Affiliate. There are many benefits, including discounted training and networking opportunities.



Practitioner (PCIfA) – on the right path:

whilst you have been studying, training or working you will have been closely supervised. PCIfAs will still be under overall supervision but this accreditation demonstrates you are able to use your own judgement and take responsibility for your own work.

Associate (ACIfA) – building your career portfolio:

through work you will have developed your knowledge, competence and confidence in your area of work. ACIfA accreditation demonstrates that you take responsibility for your work within a structured working environment and regularly deal with complex and non-routine situations.



Member (MCIfA) – recognising your expertise:

MCIfA accreditation is a recognition that you have achieved a high level of professional competence. MCIfAs have authoritative knowledge and depth of understanding of the sector and of a broad range of historic environment practices. You take full responsibility for your work and are confident to make decisions across a broad range of complex, technical or professional activities.

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¹ Student members are undertaking a full or part-time course (normally half or more of a working week) of study in subjects relevant to archaeology and the historic environment, or are undertaking an unrelated course of study but with an aspiration to pursue a career in archaeology and the historic environment, or are undertaking a programme of vocational training approved by ClfA.