



Chair's Introduction

It's been a busy year for the (relatively) new DF committee. As we have begun to settle into our roles we have gained in momentum, especially over the last six months which have culminated in some excellent new initiatives. We are on the brink of making a lasting difference across the heritage sector.

Priorities have been for more coherent statements on where we need to improve and the approach we should take with various issues. I believe we have achieved this aim with the draft 'Statement of Competence' which is clear, simple and applicable to all registered organisations.

"The (minimum) level of competence to be expected of any professional archaeologist shall be equivalent to Practitioner (PCIfA) or above. Any employee who is not working at PCIfA level competence must be working within a structured training programme designed to take them to PCIfA level competence."

This statement has been validated at Advisory Council, something that DF has striven for for years. The Statement of Competence will ensure RO's have mandatory systems in place for training to PCIfA level for all staff who have not yet achieved this level of competence. This is a reflection on the direction of the industry as a whole, especially for new field archaeologists who will benefit greatly from structured training programmes in particular on large excavations. Not only will this advance individuals, but it will ensure the standards of field work will be higher than ever before.

Our response to the Historic England report regarding the shortage of professional archaeologists almost went viral across our sector and proves how relevant we are with our membership and across the industry as a whole (see page 8, for the statement).

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DF is on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/groups/934376823319526/>

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http://kb2.adobe.com/cps/897/cpsid_89736.html

The Diggers Forum 'Call for Voices' in which people were encouraged to submit videos of their training experiences from across the UK was the main headliner this year. These "Talking heads" videos of the training experiences of archaeologists were played to a training workshop at the CIfA Conference and the 'voices' submitted expressed a wide range of views. The results of this survey will feed into new initiatives over the coming year and beyond.

DF Committee members have been actively attending meetings with the CIfA Advisory Council; Industry Working Group; Groups Forum, Membership Validation Committee and other conference sessions. Regular attendance across CIfA ensures that the views of the DF and the commitments every committee member has to pay and conditions are present and impact every level within the CIfA.

I have never forgotten my roots as a field archaeologist, but then again 13 years in the field with low pay and poor conditions are hard to forget! For too long now field archaeologists have had a poor deal when it comes to pay and conditions with nearly all companies paying the CIfA recommended minimum salaries rather than the Recommended Starting Salaries (RSS). My main objective as Chair of DF is to change the perception of field archaeologists as a common commodity and low paid worker – who will just settle for anything and be happy with any work.

As we move forward over the next few years there are many new, large schemes on the horizon. This will mean there will be a shortage of experienced field archaeologists to supply the demand. Archaeologists are in a better place than ever before, not only to make important discoveries, but to change how the industry is managed and structured. With the right negotiations at the start of large projects and the correct training systems in place, new archaeologists entering the profession will be in a stronger bargaining position than ever before. Fully trained professionals who undertake accurate and skilled excavation work will be more valuable as they will be better able to meet managers' and clients' objectives. If we raise the bar on large infrastructure projects, such as HS2, it should have a lasting effect across the industry as a whole. However, please don't be complacent and think change is just going to happen. The success of this will be up to every DF member (and heritage professional) to ensure that we keep up the pressure to maintain a living wage for all site staff at all levels.

I believe that the Institute for Archaeologists becoming Chartered was a profound moment in the history of the profession. Developers understand the concept of 'Charterhip' as a measurable quantity for the value of professionals working on their projects. Now for the first time developers see archaeologists on a comparable level with the other main disciplines. This means things can only get better. In fact I have noticed that this change in attitudes towards heritage sector staff is already starting to happen.

So what will the direction and the initiatives of the DF Committee be for the rest of this coming year?

There are nearly 800 members of DF but I have a personal aim to see this figure doubled over the next year. I urge everyone to promote DF with their colleagues and companies and get as many people to join as possible. With more DF members we will be in stronger bargaining position with CIfA Advisory Council, FAME, and the unions, to discuss pay and conditions as we will have more influence and clout in negotiations. We are not asking for anything more than we deserve, but just to have more of a comfortable life in the profession which we love – just like people who work in the other comparable professions.

I would like to organise a conference with HS2, FAME, BAJR and CBA on pay and conditions and what can be realistically be achieved to raise the bar across the industry. But it is not down to just HS2 to do this – everyone must play a part for this to work and succeed.

Compiling data can take time and the effects of shift-working has been the subject of a working group, along with other surveys on such topics as ‘women in archaeology’, with more internet surveys to follow. We hope to be able to present the findings of these various surveys to the main working groups within the industry. We need to make CIfA Advisory Council, CBA, Prospect and FAME listen, and companies change their behaviours, and frankly their attitudes towards field staff. It’s a tall order but I believe it is achievable.

I acknowledge DF need to publish more –and keep members informed of events and initiatives. However, DF committee post regularly on social media and so the need for regular formal newsletters is not as important as it used to be. Every DF member on Facebook or Twitter can now see what’s happening and read about new initiatives easier than ever before. So if you’re not on social media join up and get involved.

I hosted a DF BBQ in Birmingham last month where we discussed issues such as individual Chartership, bullying and harassment, welfare on site, personal development plans, and gender inequality and sexism, at times in conjunction with other special interest groups where there is clear cross over. Please get involved during the next meet up! The more people who attend the more successful we shall be in achieving our aims and objectives.

DF will produce an example template for PCIfA application so DF Members can use as a guide in how to complete their own applications to CIfA. **(DFs Competence Matrix, online now: http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/Diggers%20specialist%20competence%20matrix_final.pdf).**

Overall, I am optimistic for the future and I will fight for the rights of the anonymous digger at every meeting and keep pushing for a change in perceptions. Any suggestions or questions please contact the committee or inbox me directly (you can find me on Facebook and my email address is on page 2).

Better pay, better work and better skills should be a commitment of every DF member. We will get there and change is happening– but we need to work together to ensure that the changes are positive ones if we are to make a lasting difference.

In closing, I’m not overly concerned with the effect that Brexit will have on the industry as a whole; although the housing market is likely to slow down, it will be major infrastructure Schemes which will keep us employed and in demand.

Happy digging,

Paul Riccoboni.

DF Chair 2016/2017

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 Chartered 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 CIfA's 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 CIfA 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>

Diggers Forum Committee

One of the main changes at DF has been the election of a new committee. There are lots of new faces who are all committed to representing site staff and who bring a wealth of experience of the issues facing us all. Many thanks, once again, to the departing committee.

Paul Riccoboni **DF Chair**



As a professional archaeologist for 13 years I know and understand the difficulties and challenges of life working in the field. Trying to establish a work life balance with low salary whilst working away from home for long periods of time can take its toll on even the most hardened digger. As Chair of DF my main aim is to help field archaeologists achieve

a better life with improved pay and conditions across all grades of CIfA membership.

Samantha Boyle **DF Treasurer**

I have worked in both research and commercial archaeological excavation environments in Northern Ireland, Italy, Ireland and England as well as teaching excavation theory and techniques at Achill Archaeological Field School and recently completed a Council for British Archaeology Community Archaeology Training Placement with Bristol Museums, Galleries and Archives.

My areas of interest include the Early Christian period in Ireland, the medieval period in Britain as well as encouraging our future archaeologists as a Young Archaeologist Club leader.

I decided to stand for the Diggers' Forum committee as I believe that improved on the job

training, better working conditions and increased pay is important for creating a sustainable profession.

Richard Bradley

Employed in commercial archaeology for over 8 years, but also spending time in research environments, I have gained extensive and varied archaeological experience on wide-ranging site types. Time on training projects with Cambria and Birmingham Archaeology led to work with Cotswold Archaeology and later Worcestershire Archaeology, where I am still based. I have particular interests in landscape-scale work and site surveying, as well as the archaeology of conflict from prehistory to the post-medieval period.



In real life I enjoy sampling numerous alcoholic products, being a musician, attending sports events and visiting various archaeological and historical sites. I joined the Digger's Forum and stood for committee as I believe it represents the views of archaeologists across the country, helping to guide and influence CIfA in the drive for living wages, better working conditions, improved training, capacity, and standards and quality of work.

Ben Saunders

I recently joined the Edinburgh office of Wessex Archaeology as a fieldwork supervisor in 2015 and offers years of experience in the field of archaeology. I have been working in archaeology since 2008, working for a small unit in Kent. After establishing an interest in Middle East archaeology during my undergraduate degree, I undertook a research masters examining trade and exchange in the Indian Ocean during the middle and high Islamic periods (c. AD 800-1550) developing a

knowledge of ceramic assemblages from the Arabian Gulf, India and Sri Lanka. I have worked for Museum of London Archaeology (MoLA) on complex urban sites in the City of London and for Cambridge Archaeological Unit working on evaluations and large quarry excavations around East Anglia, with particular focus on Bronze and Iron Age settlements and field systems. During the spring of 2014 I directed the Batinah Expressway Excavations (packages 3 and 4) which involved the recording of 80 tombs and other monuments along a 200 km stretch of a new roadway in Oman.

During this time, I honed my people management skills, learnt how to work with contractors and consultants and gained experience in the management of large scale projects. I have also worked for LP Archaeology on the 100 Minories site, City of London which gave me working experience of post-medieval archaeology. As part of the project I was involved in record checking, team management and building recording as well as producing a series of web articles based on research presented at the 100 Minories Symposium. I also completed the preliminary analysis on the preserved timber found on site.

Cat Gibbs **DF Secretary**



I have been employed in commercial archaeology for the past 8 years (well, at least for most of it, there were the usual bouts of unemployment where I worked in pubs, but I digress) and I have also spent time volunteering in museums undertaking the preventative conservation of Natural History specimens. The majority of my archaeological experience is from urban, specifically London, excavations and of course like so many others I too

specialise in Osteology. I am currently employed by MOLA as an archaeologist/assistant supervisor/general minion.

In real life, it feels like I currently have very little free time, but when I do I like going to the theatre (I'll watch anything as long as the tickets are cheap).

I joined the Digger's Forum and stood for committee as supporting the cause is never enough; if we want conditions to change we have to fight for it. I hope that by also being on the Advisory Council we can get more Diggers' voices heard to make real changes in the profession to improve wages, conditions and training.

Gemma Ward

I trained in Archaeology with History at the University of Winchester, graduating in 2009. Between then and now I kept an involvement with local community archaeology and maintained my membership with CIfA to keep up to date with current affairs in both archaeology and heritage issues. Currently employed in commercial archaeology with Archaeology South-East since Summer 2014.

I spend my summers assisting with a student training programme, which teaches British commercial archaeological methodology abroad, both to students as part of their fieldwork components for archaeological degrees within universities across the UK, and international students.

I joined the Digger's Forum as I prepared for graduation, and stood for committee as without the hard work done by the Digger's Forum in pursuit of a for living wage I would have been unable to leave the world of commerce and pursue a career in archaeology and would like to see the opportunity expanded for others who share our passion for the field, as well as improving working conditions for those of us already employed in the industry.

Robin Weaver **DF newsletter editor**

I have been an archaeologist and researcher for ten years, and a field archaeologist for three of these. I completed my PhD in 2013 at the University of Birmingham and I have been General Editor and committee member of the academic journal, *Rosetta*.



As a Digger I have worked for four units, experiencing the anxiety of short-term contracts, perpetual minima low pay, long commutes and temporary re-locations. At no point have I been paid less than CIfA minima, so I was astounded to hear that sub-minima pay is, for some colleagues in archaeology, a reality.

I joined the Diggers' Forum committee because I am concerned about this constant threat to existing standards of pay within our workplaces and, in particular, the views expressed in 2013 by senior figures in CIfA and FAME that the 'economic conditions' to improve these standards are lacking (TA88).

I want the Diggers' Forum to continue to be a voice against these 'race to the bottom' tendencies, and to remain a crucial point of contact between fieldworkers at the lower end of the pay scales and the wider Institute.

Kelly Madigan

I am a partner at L – P : Archaeology and am based in the London office. My work is mainly based in consultancy and research before anyone manages to break ground. For more details about my work and interests see here: <http://bit.ly/1ELQFPr>

I used to be a digger with Pre-Construct Archaeology in London before the recession took hold and decimated the workforce. Like so many I found commercial field archaeology to be unsustainable as a means of reliable income and personal career development because its at the real sharp end of the planning process but unlike some I managed to stay in the profession by getting a job indoors.

I took the opportunity to join the committee of the Diggers Forum to help to campaign for a sustainable profession, clear career support, acknowledged value of archaeology to society and also to campaign for a wage befitting the skills, education, knowledge and craftsmanship of a professional archaeologist. Hopefully through Diggers Forum I can do my bit to help those in the field and help get field archaeology to where it should rightly be.

The archaeologist shortage:

A Diggers' Forum response

Diggers Forum welcomes the report by Historic England into the ‘Shortage of trained archaeologists’, which has brought national attention to a problem we have long been pointing out. However the report contains a glaring omission: the reason for this ‘shortage’. There is in fact not a shortage of trained archaeologists in the UK. There is a shortage of archaeological companies willing to match the level of skill, education and professionalism of staff with appropriate remuneration, improved conditions and decent contracts. This has led to a drain of trained staff which over the last few years has felt more like a flood. Simply put, archaeologists on all grades are not paid enough, do not have enough job security and have to put up with such poor conditions when in work that they are forced out into other jobs.

There are hundreds of highly trained professional archaeologists who left the profession either during the recession or over the last few years of minimal growth who understandably will not return to a life of low pay, poor conditions and short term contracts (4792 archaeologists in 2012/13 compared to 6865 in 2007/8- a drop of 30% (Aitchison and Rocks-Mcqueen 2013: 10)). There are hundreds of career entrants who leave after less than five years in order to obtain a more stable, higher paid job outside of the profession, with studies repeatedly showing a high attrition rate within the 25-30 age group. The most recent survey of the profession (Aitchison and Rocks-Mcqueen 2013: 13) found that, potentially as a result of this exodus, there are significant skills shortages and skills gaps across the profession in fieldwork, post-excavation analysis and project management.

Diggers Forum sees these major infrastructure projects (e.g. HS2) not only as an opportunity to

enhance our understanding of the archaeology of the UK but also as the catalyst for change. A higher, and sustained, demand for archaeological services over the period envisaged by the report gives us an opportunity to reform the way we operate, both in terms of respect and reward, to enable the high quality results we should be striving for.

It is vitally important that we learn lessons from the past. Archaeological companies providing services to national infrastructure projects should not flood the market with cheap, untrained, inexperienced staff, in order to drive down prices in order to be 'competitive' on price, rather than quality or service. If this happens upon the impending HS2 and other large projects, then we face a bleak future once these projects are over. Companies will not be able to sustain staffing levels, and again thousands of archaeologists will be forced out to seek higher paid, more secure jobs outside of archaeology, which will inevitably lead to a second skills gap in the profession.

Archaeologists should be remunerated correctly for their skill. Companies should be worried that their experienced, professional staff might be employed on a better wage by another company. Companies should be investing in their workforce to ensure they are well trained and well-motivated to complete their work. Employees should take advantage of this known and now well publicised 'shortage' to push, through the unions and CifA, for higher wages and higher standards. This is particularly true of those in ACifA level posts (supervisors and project officers) who, in the latest JIBA report for CifA (*The Archaeologist*, Autumn 2015) have been shown to be those most at risk of being paid below even the minima set by CifA and BAJR. With these individuals being the most in demand, it should be them who are seeing the greatest benefit of the 'shortage'. It should certainly not be a strain for them to be paid at or above the CifA recommended minimum level.

The recession was widely, and perhaps rightly, blamed for the freeze on wages and the tightening of company belts. This vast increase in work should be an opportunity for the archaeological employers to make up for that lost time, both for their companies and for their employees. If we do not fight now to raise the level of pay to CifA Recommended Starting Salary (RSS) then we will continue to see talented skilled professionals leave commercial archaeology, a scenario which, as the HE report demonstrates, causes a great many issues.

A Shift in Archaeological Practices

Jessica Bryan, Prospect Union Representative

Working within the construction industry there is often a need to fit into a timetable not designed by ourselves. As such we often come up with new procedures to facilitate greater productivity and efficiency. Recently these external pressures have grown, especially in urban areas, with the tendency leaning not towards budgetary restrictions but time. Principal contractors are employing archaeological units based on the number of person-hours they can provide in the shortest length of time, be this by putting more staff on site or by working longer hours.

Some projects across the UK and Ireland have recently been completed using shift working, where two or more teams of archaeologists work on a site continuously for 16 to 24 hours.

It is easy to envisage the problems and issues that could arise from working in this manner. Not only can the archaeological interpretation suffer, but also the morale of the staff on and off site. Good archaeological interpretation requires careful work and good communication between colleagues. At the end of each shift the work has to be handed over between teams, and archaeologists pick up where another has left off, which can clearly lead to problems.

The Prospect union Archaeologists Branch decided to survey the staff working on two of these projects to capture their thoughts.

Prospect survey

The survey was designed by Prospect Union representatives, and questions were aimed at collecting information about who the contributors were, their morale and wellbeing after working shifts, their opinion on the effect of shifts on the archaeological interpretation, health and safety issues arising and the logistics of running a shift-working site.

About 50% of the people working on the projects responded to the questionnaire. An even mix of people from each shift (on the projects surveyed, the shift pattern operated as an early shift 7am-3.30pm and a late shift 3pm-11pm) completed the survey.

The survey contained 14 questions, some with multiple parts. Each question had a yes/no answer or a sliding scale of 'strongly agree' to 'strongly disagree'. There was also the opportunity to add comments.

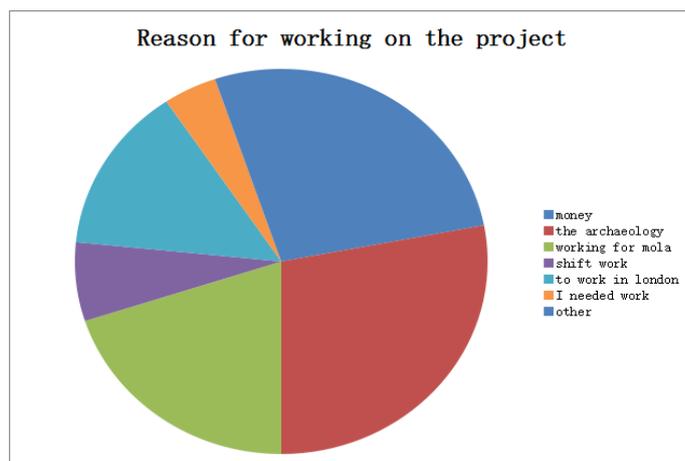
Records on sickness and accidents held by HR and the Health and Safety Manager from the organisations involved were also consulted for information. These (for confidentiality reasons) will not be extensively commented on here; however the general outcomes will be highlighted.

The results

Questions within the survey can be split into four main sections, discussed below.

Reasons for taking shift work

By far the main reason for people choosing to work on the projects was the archaeology, closely followed by the money.



Impact on archaeological interpretation and standards

Problems identified on-site with archaeological interpretation have been confirmed during the post-excavation process that is currently underway. Shift working had a detrimental effect on the interpretation of the archaeology and standards of work; with the main problem being the amount of people excavating complex stratigraphy with little communication, resulting in incomplete records and muddled or conflicting results.

The survey asked how well the handovers between shifts went, and 67% said poorly. Most people commented that handing over complex archaeology did not work. It was also identified that the supervisors needed more time (than presently allocated) to hand over their work and that of their team.

At the very beginning of the projects, handing over work from archaeologist to archaeologist was attempted but this meant the supervisors didn't have an overview of everyone's tasks. Comments suggest this improved when supervisors handed over first followed by the archaeologists. Handovers also got better when the time allowed was increased.

There was also an issue with rushed records, deriving from the need to finish them by the end of the shift so the person taking over your area knew what had happened. It was not feasible to leave paperwork unfinished.

Most people generally thought the shift work did not appear to affect the quantity of work completed however 58% thought it did impact on the understanding of the archaeology.

Problems occurred when records were changed because of the excavator's experience, disagreements in interpretation or even just differences in light. Initially archaeologists wanted to change and erase work without discussion, which would have removed any evidence that could be vital in solving contradictions found during post-excavation work. This also often caused friction and frustration as individuals felt their experience

was being undermined. 76% of people said there was 'somewhat' or 'much' friction between colleagues.

Impact on logistics of running the project

Questions were asked to identify how well the projects ran from a logistical point of view. Overwhelmingly (80%) people were happy with the information they received from management and HR. However, the comments indicated the speed and manner in which this was delivered was sometimes inadequate, particularly on the late shift when office staff were not available after office hours.

A number of issues occurred with pay with employees not receiving the correct amount. This was partly due to the increased workload of administrative staff and processing overtime payments.

It was identified through the comments that the amount of time allocated to setting up the project and initial briefings for the supervisors was not adequate, and that organising the supervision of shifts requires more time than a normal project.

Absences due to illness and short notice leave also caused issues particularly for the supervisory team. On occasion it was difficult to provide cover for absence supervisors especially at the weekend or for the late shift where 11 hours rest between shifts is required by law, and sites were left short due to insufficient staffing support. It was noted that the usual on site duties of the supervisory team were increased and often they were stretched to complete their tasks. Supervisors were often still working when their shift was over, remaining in touch with those on-site and helping to solve problems. 50% of people thought that the supervision was affected somewhat or very much, with 50% saying not at all.

Impact on health and safety and employee wellbeing

Nearly everybody (92% agreed or strongly agreed) that work/life balance is the responsibility of the employee and the employer.

Most people (73%) thought that the health and safety concerns of shift work were addressed, however, that the effects of longer working hours and a longer working week were not taken into consideration. Issues arose when adequate breaks were not provided to combat fatigue.

There was an even spread of people who said that the shift work had or had not impacted their domestic life and leisure time. The comments highlighted tiredness, the problems with late night and early morning travel time and working Saturdays as the main issues.

There was an even spread of people who thought that the shift work affected their moods, stress levels, tiredness and appetite. However, 43% agreed impact on tiredness has been due to the extended working weeks.

The information provided by HR and the Health and Safety Manger concluded that the levels of sickness and injury were no greater than other large scale, high-pressured archaeological sites working 6 day weeks. As identified by the questionnaire, it was the combination of the length of the project, the shifts and the longer working week that impacted upon people's health and morale.

The pros and cons of shift working

From the results of the survey a number of pros and cons can be identified about working shift patterns on archaeological sites

Pros

The client saves time on their project.

Archaeologists earn a lot more for a brief period.

Cons

The archaeological interpretation suffers. Trying to read a landscape that appears pretty different to how you left it 15 hours previously can

unfortunately (and surprisingly easily) lead to a situation in which errors creep in, in terms of the interpretation.

Shift-work is *not* carried out by one large team split into two shifts. Very separate shift teams seem to emerge, sadly with some friction between them on occasion.

Low morale can occur when there is little opportunity to discuss changes to interpretations.

Each week worked on site is two weeks in real terms – two weeks' spoil, two weeks' finds, two weeks' supplies needed. Even with well-planned back-up, this can lead to problems mounting (literally) on site while the outside world is no longer at work.

The workload of the supervisory team is increased keeping up with the archaeological records and logistical issues created by the shift work. It was also difficult for them to switch off when not on site knowing work was still continuing.

Providing cover for absent staff is difficult, particularly supervisors.

Working at night requires a great deal of quality lighting, something that the contractor may not understand. If lighting is inadequate the following morning, in daylight, decisions made the previous evening can actually seem incomprehensible.

It can be difficult to get contractors to provide support such as machine drivers and labourers, and external services such as 'muck away' may not be available.

Conclusions

From the survey responses and comments from the post-excavation team we can see that shift working is not appropriate for archaeological work. The entire process is based on communication and interpretation, which is clearly impaired by two distinct teams working on the same features. It is especially detrimental to work when used on long-term sites with complex stratigraphy.

The greatest impact is on archaeological standards and interpretation. Shift work has a negative impact

on the quality of work, and extra effort has to be made by those on-site and during post-excavation to maintain standards. These can be mitigated but only by staffing shifts with highly experienced staff - the quick decision making and record creation requires experienced diggers familiar with the methodologies and processes – however that is not always possible, especially in the current market with a shortfall of such individuals. Successful archaeological excavation involves working through a process, testing hypotheses and discussion. Handing over your work to another archaeologist is not the same as working side by side. As such, if you disagree, often previous interpretations are just over-ruled and a line drawn through them (literally on occasion). Structured handovers with plenty of time did alleviate this problem somewhat, but it was impossible to eradicate it. It has since been suggested having staff working part of both shifts may have helped.

Logistically shift-working projects are problematic. Archaeological organisations are generally not set up to deal with this type of work from an administrative or managerial point of view. Extra or dedicated staff are potentially needed within the organisation to help spread the workload. The ‘out of hours’ work needs to be carefully considered for such things as tools and plant operation, and to ensure that the contractors have a clear list of working requirements well in advance. Other extra costs need to be considered, such as hiring enough site staff to cover for illnesses.

The health and safety issues do not seem to differ from those on any other large, high-pressure project.

It is clear that archaeological companies may be asked to work in shifts in the future, but it is not advisable and not something we should be contemplating. We all appreciate deadlines have to be met, and occasionally we may be required to work longer hours to complete on time, and this may be feasible depending on the archaeology, the staff and the length of time. This discussion reaches far beyond Prospect members, and a consensus within the profession needs to be sought before shift working just becomes the norm.

“To see the archaeology suffer, followed quickly by the spirit of the teams, leads to a situation whereby you feel that there is little point in continuing in a job where the client’s needs appear to come so far above everything that matters to you, including pride in the company’s and your own professional standards.”

My thoughts on shiftwork by Cat Gibbs

The majority of my time last year was spent on a site that was being excavated by two shifts of archaeologists over a six day working week. I’d like to stress that what I have written here are my views and opinions of that time.

I volunteered (as in opted) to work on this site. It would be nice to say it was the archaeology which tempted me, but if I’m being honest (which I guess is the whole point) it was an opportunity to gain more experience as an Assistant Supervisor and the overtime hours. Both of these combined totalled *slightly* more money. As I wanted to still, occasionally, see my husband I chose to undertake the day shift, working from 7 until 3.30 (so not really much more money after all) rather than the evening shift of 3 until 11. This is not to say that

the archaeology wasn’t also appealing, but realistically that was just a bonus.

I had no idea what it would be like. I guess naively I thought it would be just like working on any other site but starting an hour earlier. And I can honestly say for the first day, it kind of was. The first main difference though was the travel to work.

As I live and work in London I use public transport. So does everyone else. I usually allow a little extra time for my journeys for the crush of commuters and inevitable delays so I was looking forward to the earlier starts as there would be fewer people around. It turns out there are also significantly fewer trains. So the journey was, as suspected, quieter yes, but quicker? No. On the plus side we

would be finishing well before the evening rush hour so that would surely make up for it.

The initial few weeks went fairly smoothly. The excavation area at this time was small, and staffed by people who had been with the company for a little while so knew the ropes. Any issues we encountered were ironed out as we went, and we believed this would stand us in good stead for when the large area opened up. And we got an influx of new (to us) archaeologists.

And so work continued, by and large, smoothly. But despite working the day shift my social life went out the window. The early starts and long weeks took their toll and most evenings I would get home, wash, eat and be in bed by nine. If I wasn't it was only because I had fallen asleep on the sofa (or on one occasion in the bath, after that I just showered). If my husband and I did go out of an evening I was shattered the next day. If I wanted to go out with my colleagues to unwind after work I felt guilty about not going home. The reasoning behind the extra pay for the evening shift for the unsocial hours they worked started to feel unfair. I felt I too was missing out on this time, but not being financially compensated. And so the rift between the shifts started.

I was tired. Most evenings I didn't finish at 3.30, but instead by the time I had done a handover to several members of the evening shift it was easily 4 or 4.30 and it didn't stop there. As I was part of the supervisory team I was still being contacted into the evening to clarify what had happened in one area or another, or had I seen such and such paperwork or equipment. This was not every day, but it didn't need to be.

As work continued the archaeology became more complex and the physical labour more intensive. This is less than optimal with a team that is already tiring. Handovers became more fraught with alternate interpretations, caused in most part I suspect by the differing light and weather conditions. And so we were slowly becoming two teams rather than one team split over two shifts, each blaming the other for whatever happened to be wrong at that particular time.

More and more people were becoming disheartened and disengaged. It's hard to care about a feature

when you know you probably won't finish excavating and recording it. I think archaeologists can be quite territorial – “this is the area I have been working in and I know what is going on”. At least I know I can be. But shift work takes that away. Realistically between your shifts a whole day has passed so no, you don't know what is going on. You can't mull over your interpretation, because by the time you get back to it the feature(s) will be gone, the landscape will have changed.

We had half an hour a day to discuss what was happening, what you had done, what you thought was going on. Trying to answer any questions from the previous night, and guessing what information would be needed from you for the next shift. And if that wasn't bad enough the mornings were worse. Notes were left describing what had been done and best guesses about what should be done next. It felt like hours were wasted each day just trying to catch up. I'm not even going to mention the paperwork.

I must have had a cold (or several) for 6 months. I never felt completely refreshed. Nobody sane likes Mondays, but hated I them. I don't think I saw any of my friends for the entire time I worked there. And it all just became too much. I was exhausted and I wasn't the only one. I love my job but I just couldn't leave my bed let alone the house. I wanted to cry just thinking about it – I'm even getting a little emotional remembering it now.

But we did it, and I think we did it well. *And* we did it on schedule too, which is obviously the most important thing to those people that weren't actually there doing it, though I must admit that I do feel a little pride about that point too. That quote from Henry V, you know the one, the St Crispin's day speech. You know, he goes on a bit but eventually it ramps up. The one that goes “We few, we happy few, we band of brothers...”: just mentally stick that in here.

So, shiftwork. Are you going to become part of our lives as archaeologists? In my wildest dreams I'd like to think not, but I'm not stupid (mental obviously, but not stupid). But if you do I've got a few things to say about it.

Luckily for me – and hopefully you too – *my* next quest on behalf of the DF, will be working together with CifA staff and FAME to put together some

advice and recommendations about how to go about it if we really, really have to (just a reminder at this

point that these are definitely *my* thoughts and opinions). It's still very, very early days.

So if you have any experience, thoughts or opinions please make them count and let me know what *you* think about shiftwork or extended working hours.

Out on site, out of mind? On-site career development and inclusive management in commercial archaeology

Ben Saunders

We've all been there. The pub, mid evening, a couple of pints in (well maybe more than a couple). And someone, in a *Life of Brian* spin off, says "Yeah but what have management ever done for us?"

Apart from the wine at Christmas parties you mean? Well... Given us a job I suppose. But beyond that... Hmm. A pension? Possibly. Some usually mediocre site clothing. That's a given. Training? Well depending on the unit, occasionally yes. The compulsory stuff like CSCS, confined spaces and the minimum number of first aiders needed. But a sense of job satisfaction and personal fulfilment? Rarely.

Now it could be suggested that this is not part of management's job spec. Your own happiness and development are just that, your own concern. You want to improve; you go for it. But when you are at work, you shovel. Get that cube shifted.

And I do see their point. I've managed projects and found myself getting almost getting caught in the trap. The constant worry that you might not finish on time. Have you totally underestimated the work? Why is that person doing nothing? The misidentification of site staff as just numbers. And it quite frankly isn't good enough. It doesn't work. Sure the site may get done. But it won't be good.

The other thing is that we all know that the idea of disposable shovel-monkeys isn't true. Some unit management may think that the dig team are expendable and just throwing more bodies at a site is the way forward, but then we have all seen the scrabble between managers to get the really good excavators onto their site. So clearly there is some level of understanding that excavators are more than just uniform shovellers, even if it is evidenced by unashamed self-interest. Charitably this ongoing failure of management to connect with site and office teams could be passed off as poor or mishandled communication. Uncharitably, it looks like 'they' just don't care, which of course 'they' may not. Whichever it is, it goes against the majority of HR and management theory that have been commonplace in other industries since the mid-1990s (e.g. Parker and Price 1994).

On-site career development

There is a better way. It not only involves training archaeologists on site, it also involves training people to train others, and giving them the time and reward for doing so. With the current surge in work and the paucity of good, well trained archaeologists who can not only move a lot of spoil but also do it competently, now is the time to do it. Well actually 10-20 years ago was the time to do it, but now is as good as any time to start.

L-P Archaeology conducted an experiment in staff relations over 2014/15 with their large, multi-period urban site at 100 Minories over the London City ditch (<http://100minorities.lparchaeology.com/about>). The company took in an influx of reasonably inexperienced but keen excavators and supervisors and offering them not only a higher starting wage than any other on the market at the time, but also the opportunity for a large amount of on-site training and non-compulsory after work lectures. The outcome was a highly motivated, competent and,

quite frankly, very good excavation team who over the course of 8 months, not only dug an enormous hole, shifting a colossal amount of cube, but also developed exponentially as archaeologists. It was not always smooth and not all of the planned outcomes were achieved. This was partly due to the time pressures on site and partly due to a lack of embedded training systems at L-P, requiring new ones to be built from scratch, but overall the experiment was incredibly successful.

The approach boiled down to three main policies.

1: An inclusive and approachable management style.

2: To ensure that all site staff have the opportunity to be trained in on site processes and become as involved in the site as possible.

3: To give the staff an opportunity to research and publish their own work which will feed into the site monograph as well as developing their knowledge of the archaeology, history and sociology of the site and surrounding area.

To implement these policies, the office and site management teams developed an on-site training strategy and an off-site research seminar, alongside a more inclusive project management style. This article will look at the successes and failures of these.

Inclusive management

The site was fortunate to have both a very dedicated Project Officer and an on-site Project Manager (although as with all PMs, they has other sites which took up some of their time). Both, along with the parent company, rated training and development highly. Alongside a large amount of effort in helping staff improve themselves, they were also accessible to site staff to ask questions about site and other general enquiries, as well as regularly asking questions about the site of site staff. This at first caused confusion and worry on site, as the majority of staff were used to just being left alone. Once they realised that, rather than these questions being asked deliberately to belittle and catch them out, they were in fact being asked to make them think about what they were digging and out of a genuine spirit of enquiry, staff realised that their view and their ideas actually do matter. This level of discussion was vital to the success of the site, as colleagues learnt to trust and appreciate each other.

The on-site training

On-site training in commercial archaeology is, quite frankly, a rarity. It takes time out of the day, time that diggers could be digging. I would argue however that the time 'lost' through staff development is paid back, with interest, by the raised competence of staff and by raised site moral. Give people a stake in what they are doing and suddenly most are automatically driven to work better and to work harder. On the Minories site, this has been done through site specific toolbox talks, enhanced site tours and *ad hoc* seminars with visiting specialists (recorded by everyone for their CPD), pausing occasionally to discuss or inform about something particularly interesting that has been found or the PO/supervisors taking time out of what they are doing to answer questions and enquiries by staff.

Too often units fall into the trap of providing general toolbox talks (on say, plant movement or the dangers of the sun) and calling these training. These talks are important health and safety inductions. They are not training. Training is taking 15-30 minutes after a tea break, or taking advantage of those rare times when bad weather forces people off site, to go through a specific piece of archaeological recording or process with everyone. These should not be scheduled (as they are generally off the cuff) but should be recorded as part of the site's - and each individual's - training log to demonstrate the level of training conducted. Concepts such as the 'training hour' (Harward 2014), where at least one hour over the course of a week on site is devoted to improving on-site skills and knowledge, have been looked at by Cotswold Archaeology and L-P Archaeology

previously. At 100 Minories these seminars included clay pipe dating, a discussion on the geoarchaeology of the Thames Valley, archaeological timber recording and on-site processing, and discussions about site formation theory. There are two main reasons for the seminars.

Firstly, they bring all the site staff up to at least a basic level of competency and awareness. For example, a talk on slumping will not necessarily teach everyone something. But at least everyone on site will be aware of it and allow every staff member to work more efficiently the next time they encounter it, instead of digging it wrong because they don't know or are too worried to ask sensible questions. Secondly, they make the site team actually feel they are part of the project, respected for being intelligent useful people who are capable of learning. This approach has been continued by having individual's names under pictures of them on the website and under pictures of things they have found. Small courtesies have big effects on people's feelings. We have all seen projects where site morale has been so low or just so indifferent that it seriously hampers the successful completion of the site.



Photos: LP Archaeology



These methods also mean that site staff are informed about the whole archaeological process. Just having someone from the graphics office coming out and describing to people what they do and the little things diggers can do to improve their work saves time, not only in the field, but also during post-excavation. If this is not an option then making a series of flash cards for each department showing how things are done is one of the best ways, and has been very successful at the few units that have implemented it. This also can begin to break down the divide between office and site as everyone gets to see what everyone else does.

Off-site/after work research seminars:

Alongside the on-site training, L-P also developed the 100 Symposium (<http://100minorities.lparchaeology.com/research/100-symposium>), using the logic that much of the most important site interpretation goes on in the pub afterwards. To harness this previously untapped resource, and also to again allow the development of the site staff, L-P have been sponsoring a guest speaker on a topic related to the site every two weeks. Talks have included fantastic lectures from specialists within and outside archaeology, varying from Georgian London (David McKinstry, Georgian Group), Tudor and Early post-medieval London (Dr Nick Holder, Regents University London), The Roman Eastern Cemetery (David Bowsher, MoLA), historical creative writing (Tony Lee) and food in history (Saethryd Brandreth and Peter Ginn). This has allowed the site team to develop their own research skills and given them a structure to train themselves in researching, GIS and multiple other useful skills. The team will also get publication credit out of their research as the articles will be published as a separate site monograph and potentially in appropriate journals.

All this is obviously great for the excavation team but how does this benefit the company? Firstly it provides a forum for discussing the site outside of just the written record, allowing the management to get a better idea of what is actually happening on site, which will in turn hopefully improve the quality of the report. Secondly, it gives the company multiple chances to get their name onto publications and other outreach, building up their public image, as well as that of the authors. More companies are realising that this is a vitally important part of their business, as demonstrated by the increase in site specific press releases and dig diaries on BAJR and other outlets. And finally, it improves site morale and makes people more engaged with the work. Of course companies also benefit from having a better trained, better educated and more involved team, both site and office, who are more likely to stay with the company, given the chance. This would allow a diligent company to build up a highly professional, highly skilled team who would be able to work more efficiently, giving them quite a strong advantage over companies who are relying on another influx of keen but untrained graduates to 'paper over the cracks'. It should be noted that only one person from the site team of 15 has opted to not be involved with the Symposium, an incredibly high success rate for a voluntary scheme and a demonstration of the interest and potential out there.

While these in depth seminar series may be out of the reach of some smaller operators, it would be good to see companies or groups of excavators coming together to form archaeological research groups where their staff are encouraged to participate and present work they have completed. This is not just an L-P phenomenon. Archaeology South East, alongside University College London, run a series of lectures through the Centre for Applied Archaeology (<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/caa>) which discusses both commercial practices and research ideas. Commercial and research archaeologists from in and around Cambridge have come together to form a non-unit or department aligned monthly seminar series looking at field methods and problems, from the diggers' perspective, and to discuss areas of potential improvement and future research - Field Archaeology: Methods and Mayhem (<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Field-Archaeology-Methods-and-Mayhem/105527003117523?fref=ts>). This 'grassroots', or possibly 'muddy-puddle', level, inter-unit discussion is one that should be encouraged, not as an all-out attack on individual or collective unit management but as a way of improving the profession as a whole at all levels. I hope that there are other examples of this throughout the country.

Problems

This approach has not been without problems, however. The first was actual engagement. Some of the dig team, having come from units with the 'just shovel it out' approach, were at first annoyed by the occasional enforced stoppages for training and discussion. "I'm not interested. I just want to dig" was a typical comment. Others, showing a fatalism beyond their actual years, proclaimed the old line "Why bother, it's only digging. They won't keep us on anyway." Which is fine if you want to think that, but that is no reason to remove the opportunity from others. For a brief period, there was a small amount of disquiet on site that was potentially detrimental to the speed of work. This was due partly to a misplaced idea of being patronised, which could be

seen as endemic of the current lack of active training we see now. However, my site experience would argue that when site staff are not trained correctly, and so are left to do what they think is correct, this can lead to a misplaced confidence in their work, leading to issues on site.

Despite this L-P persevered and soon, partly through peer pressure and partly through a softening of viewpoints as staff realized the amount of effort the company and associated individuals were putting in, everyone on site came round to the increased site training, with the result that the site had the best trained and highest average competence of any site I personally have worked on. Everyone was involved in some capacity with the symposium as they all recognised a good opportunity when they saw it, even if it was only helping to run the pop-up museum for a shift. More importantly, the time 'lost' through the training and through the period of grumpiness was easily eclipsed by the increase in the work rate due to a generally contented site crew.

The second problem was one of time and resources. In any commercial project there is of course a vast amount of time pressure, particularly on large complex urban sites. Equally as a small company, generally reliant on self-employed site staff, L-P do not have the background in organised training structures that other companies could and should. Due to this the project has been unable to complete the fully structured individual training programmes that were hoped for by some at the beginning. This was disappointing and is something which could potentially be built into a future bid's time frame but looking at the amount of training actually achieved within the project, it is a fairly minor point.

Conclusion

The level of training given has been down to a fully stated and then acted upon commitment at all levels. The company, Project Manager and Project Officer all committed to investing in their team and have done a vast amount, some in their own time, to help and encourage the dig team. The team of office and site staff similarly committed to use this training to make them into more accomplished archaeologists, the majority again doing some of this in their own time. This has led to more mutual respect between management and site/office team than I have ever seen on a site before. It is due to the company making a commitment and actually then following through with it. There is no room for half measures because then the idea begins to fall apart as diggers get disillusioned allowing a poorer management to say "You see, we said no one would be interested."

When this is done well, as it has been at the 100 Minories site, it makes a work environment that is not only efficient but one that is happy. I personally have never worked on such a generally content site, with a team that has knitted together so well. The pressure was there obviously. It was a central London site with all of the noise, time pressure, issues with contractors and general hubbub that comes with that. But it was so unbelievably much better than every other site anyone there had worked on. Every member of the team wanted to be on site. There was no site scapegoat. There was no one who lagged behind. There was a team of highly motivated, highly competent individuals who could all shovel and talk at the same time. New members of staff who came onto site equally could not think of a site which had been so generally happy. Through encouragement, good people management, enthusiasm of their own and a dedication to improving their staff, L-P Archaeology, Guy Hunt and Chiz Harward built a team of very good archaeologists. I am very proud to have been one of them. I really hope other units do the same.

Ben Saunders, ACIfA.

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