



# CIFA2021 ONLINE: ANNUAL CONFERENCE

ONLINE 2021

21 - 23 APRIL 2021

## SESSION TITLE

The art of communicating archaeology

## SESSION ABSTRACT

Everyone loves a great story and in our profession we are fortunate to have so many to tell. The challenge is often pitching that story to the audience. It's not always a keen local society or a group of school students; sometimes it's a hard-pressed developer or a client with competing demands. In this session we will share some of the ways that HS2 and its amazing supply chain has sought to communicate the nature, excitement, and challenges of our works. We will be discussing examples of current best practice, unusual ways to reach an unexpected audience and how to change someone's perspective. How can we continue to demonstrate the benefit that archaeological practice brings in so many ways?

## SESSION PROGRAMME

9:00 – 9:10	<b>Introduction</b> <i>Helen Wass, HS2 Ltd</i>
9:10 – 9:30	<b>Archaeology and the media: telling the story</b> <i>Myrddin Edwards, HS2 Ltd</i>
9:30 – 9:50	<b>The burden of proof: how to evaluate our public benefit offering?</b> <i>Sadie Watson, MOLA</i>
9:50 – 10:10	<b>Archaeology, exhibitions, and the modern museum audience</b> <i>Gail Boyle, Bristol Museum &amp; Art Gallery</i>
10:10 – 10:30	<b>Death of the pop-up museum: Communicating archaeology in temporary and performance spaces</b> <i>Guy Hunt, L-P Archaeology</i>
10:30 – 10:45	<b>Break</b>
10:45 – 10:50	<b>Introduction</b> <i>Mike Court, HS2 Ltd</i>

10:50 – 11:10	<b>Cross-fertilization: archaeology and the creative industries</b> <i>Mary Ruddy, WSP</i>
11:10 – 11:30	<b>Bringing the archaeology of HS2 to a mass television audience</b> <i>Bill Locke, Lion TV</i>
11:30 – 11:50	<b>Coming home: Flinders final journey</b> <i>Caroline Raynor, Costain-Skanska</i>
11:50 – 12:15	<b>Questions and answers / Panel</b>

## SPEAKER ABSTRACTS

### **Archaeology and the media: telling the story**

*Myrddin Edwards, Senior Communications Manager, HS2*

The British media, from the BBC, SKY and ITV to the Guardian, Telegraph and Times (even the Sun!) all love a good archaeological discovery that tells the story of who we are and where we've come from. Following on from Crossrail's well-planned archaeology media campaign, HS2 is building on this success and reaching new audiences on a regional, national and international level, engaging with audiences in communities up and down the line of route and on social media.

The sheer scale of possible discoveries, the geographical span of the project and the vast range of our history to be unearthed makes HS2's archaeology programme a unique opportunity to reach mass audiences. Come find out how HS2, the archaeology community and the general public are benefitting from the biggest dig in British history.

### **The burden of proof: how to evaluate our public benefit offering?**

*Sadie Watson, MOLA*

The idea that archaeology should provide public benefit is not new and has become a vital part of our work. There is also an expectation that publicly-funded projects such as infrastructure will provide public value (Barber 2017) and HM Treasury's Green Book on managing public money (2013) introduced the concept of investment evaluation based on the principles of social value. However, we have struggled with the details of this as a sector; our methods of assessing and evaluating our public benefit are not standardised and results are rarely reported. A new UKRI research project led by Sadie Watson in collaboration with HS2 Ltd seeks to fill this gap, through determining which methods of evaluation relate most appropriately to the practice of archaeology, enabling us to focus our efforts and funding into projects and concepts which provide the most public benefit. This will bring challenges to us as archaeologists as we refocus our practice to increase its public value and relevance to society.

## **Archaeology, exhibitions, and the modern museum audience**

*Gail Boyle, Bristol Museum & Art Gallery*

Museum visitors each come with their own agenda and personal perspectives: some want a good family day out, some want a fantastic educational experience and some aren't in the slightest bit interested at coming at all. Meeting the needs of all types of professional practitioners as well as the general public has to be balanced against the ever-changing backdrop of funding requirements, interpretative trends and new technologies which often leads to innovative practice. Working from the premise that archaeology is a multi-disciplinary subject that has the capacity to engage a large cross-section of the population, this paper will explore some of the challenges museum curators face when trying to enable specialists and non-specialists to engage with museum archaeological collections at a level of their choosing and how this may not be initially prompted by an overriding interest in the archaeological record at all.

## **Death of the pop up museum: communicating archaeology in temporary and performative spaces**

*Guy Hunt, L - P: Archaeology*

This paper presents three real world examples from L - P: Archaeology's recent public engagement work. Initially styled as 'Pop Up Museums' these projects produced temporary spaces in which the public was invited to participate in a museum like experience. The focus of the work was on sites where the interpretation of the site was difficult to communicate, for example where the modern context obscures the former landscape. The work intentionally played with the conventions of the museum experience and the role played by the visitor and the way in which communication takes place.

Within the paper, we critique the idea of 'the Pop Up' and the 'experience economy', questioning the extent to which these phenomena risk substituting or undermining more substantial structures and institutions. The paper also examines the performative nature of the spaces we created; where the public were engaged in a particular type of experience and the way in which the participants responded to these expectations. We also consider the confines and constraints of this kind of communication within commercial archaeology.

Finally, the paper looks forward to engagement and communication work proposed at St Mary's Church, Stoke Mandeville within the HS2 project. We hope to emphasise the value of communicating archaeology and heritage within challenging conditions of public perception. The subject matter will also involve challenging themes around death and burial and we propose approaches for communicating this vital but potentially controversial material. Most importantly, the paper puts forward responses to our critiques and proposes strategies for the creation of space and experience in temporary contexts and for the communication of archaeology in the age beyond the Pop Up.

## **Cross-fertilization: archaeology and the creative industries**

*Mary Ruddy, WSP*

Archaeology can feel mundane and uninspiring. It can be underwhelming to look at, or seated in map regression and grey literature. Often the glut of narratives brought by research and excavation

are hidden, but they have the potential to contribute to sense of place, local culture and even community cohesion. Telling stories can make the most of archaeological work by demonstrating the benefits and promoting the discipline. But this is a skill that needs to be acquired.

One of the difficulties is finding the right tone and appropriate media to reach and connect with audiences when the work is short-lived and budgets limited. This paper first explores tried-and-tested methods of talks and mobile classrooms and highlights the value of the field staff doing the work to be trusted to act as spokespeople. This attracts talent and resonates with ClfA's Promoting Professionalism campaign and the conference theme.

It then moves on to outline the perhaps less familiar approach taken by the design consultant WSP on HS2 Phase One in Area North, working for Principal Contractor LM (Laing O'Rourke & J. Murphy & Sons Ltd joint venture). To identify relevant narratives and exploit the value of projects big and small requires a rapid understanding of public and local community interest, a solid communication strategy and venues or platforms to display content. Teaming up with professionals at local museums can be mutually beneficial. Then seeking-out the intangible culture and the cross-over between Cultural Heritage, the creative industries and entertainment can lead to co-creative projects and digital engagement suited to a changing world.

### **Bringing the archaeology of HS2 to a mass television audience**

*Bill Locke, Lion Television*

Archaeology has a long history of success on television – but it doesn't always work. How do you create a television series out of a vast and potentially fascinating project like HS2, find the best storylines amongst a myriad of possibilities and satisfy regular archaeology enthusiasts whilst also reaching new audiences? Using the forthcoming BBC2 series on the HS2 excavations as a case study, the producers, Lion Television, will explain how they are working to turn Britain's biggest dig into a popular landmark television series.

### **Coming home – Flinders final journey**

*Caroline Raynor, Costain-Skanska*

The discovery of Captain Matthew Flinders, RN, in January 2019, was met with significant national and international media interest and captured the imagination of the public on two continents. In Australia, Flinders is renowned for his achievements in the fields of navigation and cartography, yet here in the UK, his story and the significance of his *Voyage to Terra Australis*, had almost been forgotten. The identification of his remains within St James's Burial Ground, Euston and the subsequent sharing of his story has promoted a wider discourse on the value of archaeology and heritage within the construction sector, as well as uniting archaeologists, politicians and living descendants as he completes his final journey.