



Forum Dispatch

Inform, debate, represent



Newsletter 5
Winter 2010

The newsletter of the Diggers' Forum

Chair's introduction

Chris Clarke

Welcome to the all new and improved Forum Dispatch: the newsletter of the Diggers' Forum (DF) where we aim to keep you up to date with issues relevant to those of us working hard at the coalface of the industry. The Diggers' Forum is the IfA Special Interest Group representing archaeologists working in the field, whether as students, trainees, diggers or project officers.

For those who are at the beginning of their career in archaeology, or who are employed on the lower rungs of the ladder, access to reliable information on news and developments in the industry can be hard to come by and existing sources aren't often aimed at fieldworker level. The irony of the situation is that it is just these people who are most in need of this information so that they can be fully aware of important changes taking place and how these are likely to impact upon them. Developments within the industry are moving at an ever increasing pace and it is important that even the greenest of diggers keep pace with such changes.

This is where the Forum Dispatch steps in: not only is the Dispatch aiming to supply important information on industry developments, news, and events, but also a slightly more light hearted look at other aspects of our job. This is in addition keeping the membership up to date with DF activities and campaign news.

The publication of the new improved Forum Dispatch co-incides with a resurgence in the activity within the DF. Thanks to the new energy of Diggers' Forum committee members, the DF is once again working towards increasing its influence within the industry, aiming to improve pay and conditions for those at the lower end of the salary scale, and promoting opportunities for young archaeologists to take control of their careers.

The DF has much planned, with new campaign ideas, recruitment drives, and events on the cards. The next big thing is the DF survey relating to away work and travel. The survey's intentions are to collate your experiences and benefits of away work and travel as employees, something never attempted before. This will enable us to create an accurate picture of the varying standards across the country associated with this side of the job. So, we need YOU to contribute and spread the word in order to put together as much information as possible.

At the DF above all we want to engage with our membership more, by not only looking at ways of improving communications, but also encouraging members to express their views and get more involved. That means we want to hear from you, especially if you are willing to give up some of your time to help further the work of the DF supporting those like yourself within the industry. With each further edition of the Forum Dispatch we want to shout about what we have achieved on behalf of our membership, but also look at where the current issues lie and how the DF can potentially engage with such issues.



DF Committee:

Chair

Chris Clarke
AOC Archaeology
chrisclarke600@hotmail.co.uk

Treasurer

Jez Taylor
MoLA

Secretary

Sadie Watson
MoLA
swatson@
museumoflondon.org.uk

Newsletter editor

Chiz Harward
chiz@urban-archaeology.co.uk

Diary editor

Gwilym Williams
John Moore Heritage Services
gwilymwilliams70@yahoo.co.uk

Geoff Morley

Moles Archaeology
moles-arch@hotmail.co.uk

Mary O'Donoghue

Berkshire Archaeology

Phil Richardson

Archaeology Scotland
p.richardson@archaeology
scotland.org.uk



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Are your details up to date? We want to make sure you get this newsletter and other DF communications, so please let the IfA know if you change your postal or email address at:

groups@archaeologists.net

Cotswold Outdoor Discount

Did you know that IfA members can get a 15% discount at Cotswold Outdoors? If you are into the outdoors, or just need some new socks for site then you could start making back your IfA subs whilst shopping for anything from fleeces to sleeping bags, tents to torches.

Quote 'Institute for Archaeologists' at the till and show your IfA membership card. DF members should have been sent a discount code by email they can use. If you didn't receive it, let us know. You may need to speak to the manager as staff may not be immediately aware of the discount. The discount code is also valid for phone and online orders.

Please note this discount cannot be used in conjunction with any other offer. If you have any difficulty using this offer please contact the IfA office (and let us know as well!).



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 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 is to redress this balance and keep the issues and welfare of its membership at the top of the IfA 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 the IfA 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>



Letter from the editor

Chiz Harward

It's been a long time since the last Diggers' Forum newsletter, and since that last issue in 2007 the archaeological world has changed massively. There has been a major recession and huge changes in the outlook of British archaeology, and indeed the world.

The profession seemed to go from boom to bust in an instant and the effect on field workers has been frankly catastrophic with many livelihoods lost, and many experienced archaeologists forced to leave the profession. New entrants are finding it almost impossible to break into the jobs market and future changes on university education make a career in archaeology look even less appealing from a financial viewpoint.

The future shape of the archaeological profession seems impossible to predict, but we can all get involved in trying to shape that future, and make our voices and opinions heard.

Looking through previous newsletters I was struck by how on certain key issues little has changed despite the upheavals of the past few years. Most regrettably the recession bit at exactly the moment the IfA benchmarking scheme was set to be introduced, that scheme would have seen staged increases in the recommended pay minima, raising basic pay by 13% above inflation by 2013. Since then we seem to have got nowhere with increasing minima, the IfA Council having voted to freeze them again just a few weeks ago. DF members on Council argued for a rise, but were outnumbered when it came to the vote. You should all know what you can do about that!

I'm hoping that over future issues we will have some happier news to report, but to a large extent that is down to you, to get informed, to get involved, to vote, and to help create a viable profession for us all.

Throughout the last few years all Diggers'

Forum members have been struggling to keep their heads above water and unfortunately the newsletter fell by the wayside as committee members concentrated on more serious matters that directly affect the membership, especially trying to fight off threats to scrap pay minima altogether.

Recent developments have been relayed to members directly via email, but it's not the same as a proper newsletter. The AGM in September brought some fresh blood into the committee and the newsletter is now back, helping to relaunch the Diggers' Forum with a new survey on away work and travel, and a fresh new look to the newsletter. We hope you enjoy the range of articles and features, and that some of you may even be motivated to write a short piece for us!

Please let us know what you would like to see in future newsletters, We've a variety of articles planned, ranging from our usual campaign pieces, to articles on training and mentoring, vocational qualifications, and PPS5 as well as features on different aspects of fieldwork and the tools, 'culture' and history of the fieldworker.



photograph © MoLA

If you would like to contribute to the Diggers' Forum Newsletter, or have a suggestion on a subject we should cover, please contact the editor by email: chiz@urban-archaeology.co.uk

Dates for the diary and details of events or news should be sent to Gwilym Williams by email: gwilymwilliams70@yahoo.co.uk



DF roundup



photograph © Chiz Harward

Any light at the end of the tunnel?

At the DF AGM in September 2009 our Chair Chris Clarke gave a brief round-up of our work so far, and what we have been working on behind the scenes on our members' behalf. You may not have heard of much of it; some has been fairly low-key, much has not been publicised as widely as it should have been, but with our re-invigorated newsletter we intend to be much more communicative in future. If you feel there are issues that we should be tackling then let us know.

We have principally been working on two levels, taking a strategic industry-wide approach to major themes as well as approaching more specific topics the DF considers to be of prime importance.

We have **over 300 members**, which makes us one of the largest Special Interest Groups of the IfA.

We have three members on the **IfA Council**,

down from five in previous years. This has enabled the concerns and opinions of fieldworkers to be raised on Council, a situation we need to maintain. This last year we have been fighting hard to retain and implement the proposed pay minima increases in the face of vocal calls to scrap the minima. We need your help to increase our voice where it matters!

Other DF members sit on a variety of **IfA committees**, ensuring your voices are heard where it matters at a strategic level within the IfA: members are on the **Committee for Working Practices in Archaeology, Professional Training, Planning and Legislative Committees** as well as being selected to sit on **Disciplinary Panels**.

DF members are also on the **validation committee** and the **membership appeals committee** and the DF led the introduction of the recognition of field skills into MIFA applications (of which we are particularly proud).

DF members have been involved with the **IfA Self-employment Working Group** and will be helping produce guidance for members on this increasingly important area.

We've also been checking every issue of the **IfA Jobs Information Service** and on the **BAJR** website to keep an eye on what jobs are out there, but more importantly challenge any jobs which appear to be paying below the accepted IfA minima or equivalent freelance rates. We've suggested improvements to the IfA JIS and hope to be able to see some of these implemented in the near future.

We have built successful relationships with other sector organisations such as **Rescue, SCAUM/FAME, Prospect** union and **BAJR**. We also have a DF representative on Rescue's Council.

This coming year is bound to see fresh challenges adding to the existing ones, together we can try and ensure that our voice is heard and that the opinions and futures of field archaeologists are increasingly taken into account.



Changes to IfA complaints procedures

Sadie Watson

Following representations from the Diggers' Forum the IfA has decided that Special Interest Groups such as the DF can pursue complaints on behalf of their members. This will allow complaints to be pursued by the DF whilst retaining the anonymity of the original complainant. DF members initially asked about making 'group' complaints earlier in the year following a job advert paying below the IfA minima.

The IfA office receives regular approaches from field staff enquiring about procedures for complaining about low standards they have observed on site. These complaints can be in relation to both IfA members on an **individual** basis as well as to **Registered Organisations** (ROs), who sign up to maintain professional standards as part of the RO process. As individual members we all agree to abide by the rules established by the IfA and in particular the **Code of Conduct** (http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/node-files/code_conduct.pdf).

In the past many of these approaches failed to advance to a formal disciplinary investigation as the original complainants were reluctant to break their anonymity for fear of jeopardising employment prospects. Whilst in an ideal world archaeologists would feel able to stand up and make any complaint in good faith, free of any effect on their professional life, it is not as simple as that in reality and the need to protect **whistleblowers** is recognised across many professions. Archaeology is no exception, especially given the peculiarities of its jobs market.

The process for lodging a complaint has been updated to allow for the maintenance of

anonymity: the DF can now lodge complaints with the IfA on our members' behalf. This means that a DF member can approach the DF Committee with a complaint and if we consider there is a case to answer then we can raise the complaint officially with the IfA and act as a 'go-between' –keeping the complainant's name out of the process altogether.

DF committee members have experience of sitting on **IfA Disciplinary Panels** and understand the process of dealing with complaints, and the weight of evidence required. The DF will carefully consider whether to take on any complaint communicated to us, as not only does each complaint take time, but also has serious implications on the professional life of the individual(s) or RO being investigated. The DF will not pursue any complaints that it feels are malicious or frivolous, or that lack any real chance of success due to a lack of credible evidence.

Crucial to the success of a complaint is the gathering of such **evidence**, preferably including photographs and witness statements, as merely taking one individual's word against another is unlikely to provide satisfactory evidence of any breach of our professional standards or Code of Conduct. In some cases it may not be possible to pursue a case as the need for evidence may well reveal the source, in all such cases we will discuss with the complainant to see if they want to carry on their complaint **before** their name is made known. Where there is limited evidence of a specific contravention but the DF feels that there is a wider issue to be raised we may follow up the matter in an appropriate manner outside of the IfA disciplinary process.

Situations that lead to a complaint may include poor standards of fieldwork: machining, excavation and recording, fraudulent behaviour with regard to archaeological results and reporting, or the more general charge of bringing the profession into disrepute, which could incorporate significant problems with terms, conditions and pay for archaeologists.

We are very pleased this decision has been made and will be happy to embark upon the process on your behalf if we feel there is a viable case to answer. You can contact us with a guarantee of anonymity via our email addresses (see page 2).



DF Response to IfA salary minima for 2011-12



photograph © LP Archaeology

As the IfA Special Interest Group for field archaeologists, the Diggers' Forum is extremely disappointed that IfA Council has voted to freeze the current salary minima and to veto any increases in 2011. This is the second year in succession that there has been no increase in the minima, completely at odds with Council's stated intention to steadily increase the minima in line with the results of the benchmarking exercise, whose recommendations included a staged 13% increase to salary minima (above inflation as measured by CPI) over 5 years. We are now 3 years into this fabled 5 year cycle with no indication of when Council will start to implement its decision.

Freezing the IfA minima is making the current situation worse, and is sending out a clear message that lower paid IfA members will interpret as meaning that the IfA does not care about their plight. The decision clearly favours those organisations with a low-pay business model which dominate the profession. Those companies paying above minima salaries are placed at a competitive disadvantage by the continued freeze.

Inflation is currently measured at 3.2% (CPI), 4.5% (RPI) and RPIX (4.6%) and rising food, utility and fuel prices, combined with the planned increase in VAT to 20% are having a devastating effect on the real value of

archaeological wages, which by January 2011 will be worth less in real terms than they are at present. The VAT hike alone is estimated to hit the average archaeologist by over £200 a year in increased prices (Treasury model). Of course all these economic factors affect business as well as employees, however it is those at the sharp end of the profession that suffer most from effective pay cuts.

We are not so naïve as to expect significant pay increases during the current economic climate and recognise that many of our colleagues (as well as ourselves) face an uncertain future within the archaeological profession. We do however strongly believe that wages need to keep pace with inflation if we are to retain experienced staff, get through the present troubled economic times, and work towards our goal of making archaeology a sustainable and viable career.

The IfA minima acts as an essential safety net for archaeologists, especially at the lower end of the professional pay scale and a failure to increase the minima sends a clear message that the IfA is not interested in the future of these members or the profession. The DF believes that it is the prevailing economic circumstances which represent the greatest threat to archaeological jobs, and not its campaign for a living wage.



The DF recognises that union representation in the workplace is a key mechanism for arguing for improved pay and conditions. However, the DF is also aware that the highly fragmented structure of archaeological work in the UK weakens the capacity of traditional models to secure a living wage. The IfA is the only organisation with a realistic capacity to deliver improved conditions via the RO scheme as part of the professionalisation of the practice. The DF will continue to argue for the IfA to take this matter seriously, and urges archaeologists to add their voice to the DF by joining the IfA, and specifically the DF, and voting strategically in Council elections to ensure the professional body serves the interests of the wider profession.

In addition, we now recognise that there may be a reluctance on Council, and within some

parts of the IfA generally, to enter into the debate on salaries, although the Diggers' Forum do fundamentally believe that our professional body could, and indeed should, enforce the minima and seek to improve pay for all its members for the good of the profession. It seems that the time has come to re-open other avenues in our quest to raise salary, terms and conditions for our members across the UK. To this end we would call for the re-invigoration of talks between FAME (representing the unit managers) and Prospect, the predominant trade union for archaeologists. The DF would also seek representation at these discussions, whether it be via written statement or in person around the table. Only when we all make a concerted effort to establish new and effective methods of increasing salaries will the IfA be fully representative of its members.

Recommended starting salary ranges: closing the gap?

Chiz Harward

Level of competence/ responsibility	Existing IfA minima	Recommended salary range	Discrepancy
PIfA	£15,054	£18,000 - £19,500	£2,946-£4,446
AlfA	£17,534	£24,500 - £28,000	£6,966-£10,466
MIfA	£22,704	£30,500 - £37,000	£7,796-£14,296

The IfA has published its new recommended starting salary ranges for the three corporate grades of membership (<http://www.archaeologists.net/news/101209-recommended-starting-salary-ranges>), these are based on the research carried out during the Benchmarking Archaeological Salaries project and are intended to 'serve as guidance on typical starting salary ranges for comparable levels of competence and responsibility in other sectors'. At the same time the IfA has stated that the existing minima (frozen for the second

year in succession) will be retained (see above). The salary ranges can be found on <http://www.archaeologists.net/practices/salary> and are shown in the table above.

The Diggers' Forum welcomes the publication of the salary ranges and sees these as representing the levels of remuneration we should expect. We will strongly argue that the recommended salary ranges are increased in line with inflation each year. The DF also firmly believes that the IfA must retain its recommended minima as these act as an essential safety-net to prevent exploitation of



those vulnerable archaeologists trying to get their feet on the professional ladder, or survive in a time of recession and uncertainty.

The recommended starting salaries, although aspirational at the moment for all but a few, do represent a hope for the future, but only if there is coordinated action to make them reality, not just figures. The problem is that for a PlfA level digger at the moment there is nearly a **£3,000 discrepancy** between the minima of £15,054 and the recommended starting salary of £18,000. With the publication of the recommended salary ranges alongside the IfA recommended minima we now have an explicit picture of the gap that needs to be closed and how far we have to go to achieve pay levels that will allow a sustainable profession for us all.

The problem is **how do we close this gap?** How do we bring the minima up towards the recommended salary ranges? As a result of the Benchmarking process the IfA Council stated its intention to raise the minima by **13% above inflation** over 5 years, starting in 2008. The severe impact of the recession and the uncertainty it caused has meant that Council has voted against raising the minima for the past two years, meaning that we are now in a worse situation than before. The IfA council is apparently still committed to phase increases to minima, once the economic situation permits them. When that will happen though is uncertain.

The DF believes that increasing the level of

archaeological wages towards the recommended salary rates can only be **good for archaeology**. It will increase retention of those skilled staff who currently cannot afford to remain in the profession, and will open up a viable career for those who do not want to go down the route of promotion in order to achieve a sustainable income. A skilled and valued workforce is far more efficient and flexible than a semi-skilled one, and the quality of archaeological work can only improve.

Those companies that do pay well above the existing minima should be rewarded and encouraged by raising the minima up towards their pay levels, rather than dropping the minima towards the level of those who pay least. Higher pay is in the interests of all of us, including responsible employers.

One question for the future is the unknown impact of tuition fees over the next few years. **Do we as a profession want the only financially attractive aspect of archaeology to be that most archaeologists will never earn above the £21,000 threshold that triggers loan repayments?** That is not something to be proud of. If there are fewer archaeology students in the future, and those that do graduate do not wish to earn a pittance on site, then will the laws of supply and demand may finally work in our favour and push up wages?

Whatever happens in the future one thing is certain: we need decent levels of pay to create a sustainable profession.

Join us and make your voice heard!

The Diggers' Forum is the IfA Special Interest Group for field workers, that includes **EVERYONE** who primarily works at the sharp end of archaeology out on site.

The DF is open to all and represents field archaeologists at all levels -from a student considering professional archaeology to Project Officers running major excavations. The Diggers' Forum

represents **YOUR** views on a wide variety of matters within and beyond the IfA, we are the second largest SIG within the IfA and the bigger we are the bigger our voice.

If you are a member of the IfA membership of the Diggers' Forum is **FREE**, for non-members there is a subscription of **£10** a year. To join email: groups@archaeologists.net



Cvs for fieldwork jobs

Chiz Harward

Professional archaeology is still a small world where most people will know someone who knows you, but the days of getting jobs down the pub and by word of mouth are (mostly) gone. This article gives some advice for the those looking for site work. It is primarily intended for those at the start of their career but the advice is just the same for old lags struggling to cope with the baffling world of email applications and HR forms.

For most archaeologists getting a new job will involve sending off a CV and/or filling out an application form. In the absence of any formal interviews for most digging jobs this can be your only chance to sell yourself. It really is worth spending time preparing a solid but basic all-purpose CV and then adapting it for each job as required. It may sound like a lot of work and the last thing you fancy after a hard daygrafting in the rain but it really can make the difference between success and the dole.

Traditionally-formatted CVs look great and they work well for traditional industries, but for archaeological jobs the emphasis needs to be slightly different. In today's tough economic times there may be **several hundred respondents to each advert**, and the CVs all have to pass through the hands of someone who has a quota to fill and not a lot of time to fill it. They have to make a quick decision about each CV and get that pile down to the few who will get a reread and hopefully a phone call. In reality you may have as little as **30 seconds** to make sure your CV stays on the table and doesn't go straight into the bin -

which is where the vast majority will go. So how do you make your CV escape the 'Reject' pile, and get into that pile of 'Possibles' which will get a more in-depth read?

Firstly, **read the job advert**. And then read it again. Make notes: what do they say they want in terms of experience? If you don't clearly state that you have the required skills then there is clearly no reason why you deserve to escape the reject pile! Make sure your CV and covering letter cover the relevant points clearly.

Secondly, is there an **application form and job description**? If there is then it is *essential* to read it properly and follow the instructions. If you can't be bothered to fill out a form properly by rewriting your experience into the format they want, rather than the way you did it last time, then the employer will naturally think that you don't really want the job and can't follow instructions. Always write everything out in rough first and get someone to proof read it, preferably a non-archaeologist.

Similarly if there is a job description then use that to adapt your CV and covering letter. It sounds crazy but you really do need to show that you are 'an excellent team player' and have 'fantastic communication skills' if that is what they want -but do back it up with **evidence** from your career. This is particularly important when applications are dealt with by HR departments who aren't archaeologists and won't be able to read between the lines. As a template consider using the IFA statement of competence and their skills matrix (see <http://www.archaeologists.net/join/individual>) to outline experience and highlight any particular skills you developed on each site.

Phone up: ask to speak to the person named on the advert, or to HR/whoever deals with recruiting. If you know someone in the unit who respects you, use that contact! Namedropping may result in a discrete (or indiscrete) check and a thumbs up from an existing employee should get your CV a proper airing. If you don't know anyone then still phone, ask intelligent questions, be prepared for searching questions in return, and sound interested and friendly.



Get your application in early, preferably the day the advert goes up, but at least phone up to have a chat and get your name known. With most employers now accepting email applications (because they want to fill those posts quickly) there's no excuse for not quickly adapting your CV and getting it off ASAP. Employers advertise because they need more staff; whilst some units may wait for the closing date and review all applicants thoroughly, for many other units it is a case of needing the staff to start yesterday and the first few people who get in contact and have a half-decent CV will snap up the jobs. Jobs can be filled within a few hours of going up on BAJR.

Be prepared for an immediate start. This sometimes means jumping ship before the end of that huge road scheme you are on to avoid being lost in the flood of recently unemployed colleagues.

So what needs to go on your CV? And how long should it be? Well the standard view is two sides of A4, with the 'good stuff' on the first page. It's not a lot of room so think what you need to prioritise. You are more likely to get a job due to a valid **CSCS** card, full clean **driving licence** and your own **car** than with a first class degree, so industry tickets should be given pride of place on the CV: state that you have a CSCS/EUSR card, that you have experience driving minibuses/4WD and that you hold a **First Aid at Work** (FAAW) ticket. Say that you have your own car in your covering letter, it **does** make a difference: employers want staff who are flexible and can get to the office on time for those early starts. They really *don't* mind paying for you to do a CSCS test, but they *do* mind not being able to get you onto that site immediately because you don't have one *now*. It is always worth trying to get a FAAW ticket through a university club or a voluntary group, and you could consider paying for a CSCS test yourself. If you are a foreign national then clearly state that you have a **work permit**.

Do list your degree, but don't bother with lists of modules unless it is something relevant to the job, e.g. you majored in Archaeological GIS

if the job is as a GIS officer. Listing A levels and GCSEs isn't really relevant to a digging job, although if you are low on experience it is worthwhile, especially if they are good grades. Remember, you are trying to sell yourself as a professional archaeologist, not as a student.

Survey experience is a good selling point, preferably with a Leica GPS or Total Station. See if you can spend a few days on the next site being the chainboy for the surveyor, setting up the machine and getting a basic intro is valuable experience and can be listed on your CV or covering letter (as well as being CPD). But **be honest** about your level of experience and don't lie. If you have only a slight knowledge/ability then maybe include this in with your covering letter or with your employment breakdown for that site rather than listing it as a specific skill.

The **list of previous jobs** is a major element of the archaeological CV. Indeed **'time-served'** is probably the most common tool for deciding which person to hire. Employers like CVs with plenty of experience working for good units, your task is to show how your experience makes you stand out compared to others who may have been digging longer. Include a short sentence about your current role, although this could go in a covering letter. **Repeat employment** always looks good, as do long periods of work or being kept on after the end of major projects, so highlight those occasions.

Use the IfA competence statement format and set out clearly what you did on each site, what you learnt and what level of responsibility you held. Be honest as everyone really does know everyone and lying on your CV will lose you that job (plus it's against the IfA code of conduct!) You want to get across your breadth of experience, your hard-working ethics, your ability to learn quickly and your mastery of relevant skills -all in one or two lines.

University clubs, and summer jobs in Tesco's are not always relevant to digging so only put them in if you have had long gaps in employment, or have little experience. Listing hobbies can be a double-edged sword: if you



Basic information for an Archaeological Curriculum Vitae

Name with post-nominals including BA etc and IfA grade if applicable.

Date of Birth optional

Address and CURRENT contact details check this is up to date

Education (Degree if applicable, don't list your GCSEs and A levels if you have a degree)

Certificates held including driving licence, CSCS, manual handling, risk assessment etc

IT training/Survey Demonstrable experience and level of competence

Current position

Experience in reverse order and with length of time if short contracts

Publications (including brief outline of grey literature: list types of grey literature eg Method Statements/DBAs/EIA chapters/Evaluation reports)

Referees with their current contact details, preferably including a mobile number.

say you love travel, then the employer may instantly fear you flitting off every two months to Thailand! Consider the relevance of all the information before you put it down.

Think about who you use as a **referee** for each job and try and try and have a few to choose from. The word of your Project Officer at your old unit will generally be trusted more than a world class academic if you are after a digging job, and vice versa. Finally, warn your referee that you are actively job hunting.

Covering letters/emails give you the opportunity to summarise your CV in a few sentences. Don't repeat what is on the CV but tailor the text to the specific job that you are applying for. Show how your experience fits with the skill set that they want, and add in any additional relevant skills that aren't highlighted in your CV.

This is also the place to list all those things that don't fit on a CV, like that you are available for an immediate start and have your own car. Keep it brief but succinct.

Make sure you use a sober-sounding email address, after all, would *you* employ funkydribbler123@hotmail.com?

Fundamentally you do need a little luck and to be in the right place at the right time, but try and load the dice in your favour. One final piece of advice: ALWAYS run a spell check, and please, please, don't misspell archaeology!

Useful web-pages and links

There is plenty of information available online: the IfA website also has some excellent resources such as the list of Registered Organisations (<http://www.archaeologists.net/ROsearch>). Look at the BAJR (<http://www.bajr.org/BAJREducation/default.asp>), the CBA (<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/>) and Current Archaeology (<http://www.archaeology.co.uk/>) websites for a host of useful information on everything from courses, excavations and field schools to local societies. Archaeology Abroad runs a subscription service for digging opportunities overseas (<http://www.britarch.ac.uk/archabroad/>). All the websites have links to a wide variety of archaeological organisations.



Starting out

For new graduates or starters in archaeology a major problem with archaeological CVs is the emphasis on **time served** in commercial archaeology: it's a catch 22, especially for those trying to break into the jobs market for the first time who can't get commercial experience without having...commercial experience. One way around this is to get *far* more **voluntary** experience than is required for your degree. It **is** hard to survive on a student loan and many students have to work almost full time, but putting in the time on site now will pay dividends later. Plus you find out if you *really* like the job.

Try and use those long summer (and Easter) holidays to get some varied experience and build up your basic digging skillset. There are some excellent training and research excavations around the UK: choose one with a good reputation and that preferably employs **professional archaeologists** as supervisors - you will then be getting trained by people who know the reality of archaeological work and you will make good contacts for later.

Whilst it is best to build up a solid basis of British fieldwork if you intend to work in the UK in the future, combining foreign digs with a bit of travelling is a great way of meeting people and seeing the world. You could consider spending a couple of seasons on the same project: as a returnee you may get offered in-depth **training** in a particular skill like planning, environmental processing or context recording, but do try and get a varied spread of experience with different projects. Use the opportunity to learn about fieldwork, and where

your interests and strengths lie, whilst not forgetting to enjoy yourself.

In addition to formal fieldwork you could join your **local archaeology society** and help in occasional fieldwork like fieldwalking or standing building recording, or volunteer at a local museum or unit washing finds. You can do much of this in term-time as well as in the holidays and will get an insight into the range of archaeological organisations out there, as well as making good friends and useful contacts.



photograph © Wessex Archaeology

Whilst you may not have accrued any actual commercial experience by the end of your degree, you will look a lot more **attractive** to an employer if you graduate with 6 months varied experience, rather than the minimum 6 weeks or so. It shows **commitment** to your future career and units will appreciate that and you may get lucky. Units will often take a chance on the occasional **keen but green** graduate as they feel they can pay them a lower wage as they do not have the experience yet, just make sure that there is proper training and that your pay goes up when you reach proficiency! Some more enlightened units have formal trainee schemes and they will definitely be looking for applicants showing a serious level of commitment.

Times are especially tough for those trying to get started, but all that struggle should be the perfect training for trying to survive once you have finally become a digger!



Diggers' Forum survey of travel and away work

Working away from home has always been a major part of life for many field archaeologists and is an accepted part of the job for many -as it is in the wider economy. For some archaeologists the accommodation provided on away jobs is the only way they can live on an archaeologists wage, for others a last minute posting to the other side of the UK means disruption to family life and additional strains on childcare and relationships.

Since the start of the recession there has been clear evidence of some units reducing or even **scrapping** long-established benefits such as accommodation or transport to site for staff hired from regional offices, whilst other units have kept their benefits at pre-recession levels. Anecdotally the advertised headline salary may now be less important to many than the 'fringe' benefits of accommodation, paid travel time and subs, but the truth is that **no-one really knows** how important an issue away work is to today's archaeologists.

Similarly whilst we know that many field staff often drive long distances to get to work, and from the unit base to site, no-one has any meaningful figures for this, or what the long-term effects on staff are. The **Diggers' Forum** is carrying out a **major online survey of travel and away work** in order to collate this information, assess the range of current practices, and to try and gauge how much of an issue this really is to you, the workforce. We can then look at the whole issue from a position of greater knowledge and understanding. We

will be canvassing **YOU** for your experiences and perspectives, and also asking employers to add their side of the equation so we can understand the issue in the round.

A car is a near essential tool for many archaeologists across the country, and with **rising fuel prices** the cost of getting to and from work can escalate quickly. How do we cope with rising prices at a time when many employers are not raising wages and the IfA is not raising its pay minima? We need **clear data** to support our arguments for better pay.

Away work is a major requirement of any **'flexible workforce'** and its not going to go away in the future, but we can try and make it **fair and transparent**. We need to make sure that there is a balance sought between the benefits of continuous employment -albeit on away-work- and the stresses and costs incurred by daily travel. With many units sending teams right across the country and with larger units increasingly setting up regional offices, it is a good time to find out what is current practice.

Practices *are* under pressure from the economic situation but we need to learn from best practice about what is possible: the 'taxable benefit' status of accommodation provided to some temporary staff has been used to as a reason not to provide accommodation, yet years ago **English Heritage** negotiated with the taxman and provide excellent accommodation with only a small surcharge to the digger, whilst one major unit recently provided 'free' accommodation for temporary staff working just up the road from their office.

Of course away work can offer **positives**: to many the chance of 'free' accommodation means they can save money, especially if they can live with parents or sofa-surf at weekends or between jobs. Some diggers can supplement their income with away-subs that *can* add up to nearly **£3000 a year**, but their very own colleagues may find *their* entire week's subs swallowed by train fares or petrol every weekend. Months spent sharing a room with a snorer are no-ones idea of fun, yet working



away can sometimes mean we have more free time by reducing long commutes and can mean you have time to get to know colleagues out of work hours, sometimes rather too well...

There will probably be a split between those who work for an employer at its home base and are occasionally (or mostly) sent away, for days, weeks or months at a time, and those who move around the country working away from their home for different employers. These overlapping groups of archaeologists face different challenges and receive different benefits and allowances. There has been a further split on some recent projects where one group of archaeologists get paid accommodation, whilst colleagues receive nothing.

Those employed by a company as 'home workers' often travel long distances each day to work as the short contracts on offer mean it is not worthwhile moving house. Whilst those who work away from home face the problem of having to **pay for two homes** if no accommodation is provided. Can the difficulties facing each set of workers be solved by a common solution, will the pros and cons of each way of working cancel each other out, or does one set of archaeologists get a rougher deal than the other?

We do expect that there will be some **geographical bias** –London archaeologists have traditionally got around by public transport whereas in rural areas there is often no choice but to have access to a car– but are there more insidious differences between the sexes, or with age? Does away work or long hours spent travelling force those ready for a more settled life out of the field and into the office or even out of archaeology together? These long term effects are hard to measure, but our survey hopes to supplement the anecdotal evidence.

We want to understand how all of this balances out in archaeology and how it affects people over the long term. Fundamentally we want to understand how

this aspect of the work affects our attempts to achieve sustainable archaeological careers.

We want to hear from **all field archaeologists**: even if you don't do away-work we all travel to and from site and office and we need to get a **balanced** view from the broad church of site archaeologists of what is happening and what is expected of them. We'd also be interested in the opinions of those who have left archaeology over the last year for whatever reason.

We will be sending a further survey to archaeological employers in order to get their perspectives on the issue. The survey will run for two months, and we will then collate and publish the results.

Please be as accurate as possible in your answers, we do realise few of us can remember exactly how many days we spent in a B&B last year, but try and give a rough figure. If you have a diary or pay slips they may well be helpful in answering questions about how much you have earned in subs or expenses. The survey will be confidential and no names will be associated with any responses without permission.

To make it simple and accessible the survey is available online and is set out in the Survey Monkey format that will be familiar to many. We have tried to stick to **multiple choice** answers where possible, but realise that these can be intensely annoying and irrelevant to what you actually want to say! So please jot down any thoughts as you do the survey and add them in the free-text box at the end. The survey should take **XXX** minutes -much less if you don't do away-work- so please set aside some time to take part and help us find out what the current situation is, and how it affects us all. **The survey can be found at XXXXXXXXXXXX.**

If you would like to email any longer comments or stories then we would love to hear from you. If you would like a **paper version** of the survey then please contact us and we can send out a paper copy or a **PDF**.

DF Training pages

CPD for field archaeologists

Mary O'Donoghue

CPD - what is it?

CPD -Continuing Professional Development is about developing your skills throughout your working life and it involves just 50 hours over each two year period. It is based on your PDP and CPD Log:

PDP -your Personal Development Plan is a record of your overall aims and objectives in the short, medium and long term.

CPD Log -is your record of your learning activities and can be used as evidence of your achievements in the short and medium term.

If you are an IfA member then CPD is mandatory; if you are not it is still a useful framework on which to develop your career, especially if you are thinking of joining the IfA in the future. For more information please check out -

http://www.archaeologists.net/sites/default/files/node-files/ifa_cpd.pdf

PDP and your CPD logs are a way of developing your own step by step guide to set yourself up with a series of activities that will lead to you achieving your stated goals. Prepare your CPD log in six monthly periods - achieving small goals frequently.

1 List the skills and experience required and consider the gaps in your current skills, experience and knowledge that you need to develop.

- For example, a digger will need to have experience of a range of digging, recording and drawing skills as well as taking, recording and processing environmental samples and finds.
- Don't forget to log on site training - asking someone more experienced for their opinion/interpretation and asking for frequent digger site tours to gain a

better understanding of how your part of the site fits within the wider context.

- Offer to help those less experienced working near-by and log this also.

2 What other kinds of activities will help to fill the gaps in your experience? Consider **short courses**, as well as asking your employer about any opportunities for post-excavation work, future fieldwork and training/NVQs.

And if there is something you'd like to achieve in a few months time but need to prepare for in advance - this can be added as a more medium term goal but again break it down into achievable goals.

3 To prepare a short research paper, for example, you would need to look at current research and design a research strategy - this private research may take a couple of Saturdays. What is your specific research aim? What are the best ways of accessing the information you need and do you need to get in touch with someone to do so?

As part of your **medium term goals** you can also consider:

4 What range of experience do you need





CPD doesn't have to involve a formal training course: on-site training, feedback and mentoring is an excellent way of making appropriate and achievable progression and is often far more relevant to your current position.

Supervisors and specialists should be encouraged to give toolbox talks or seminars on subjects relevant to what is being dug up, and to back these up with handouts, photocopies and references

to reach promotion to the next level? If you are unsure talk to someone currently working in that position and find out what other responsibilities come with the position beyond the obvious - such as health and safety qualifications.

5 List the activities in your PDP as **SMART** objectives (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant and Time Bound). By using SMART objectives you can set each goal to an achievable and measurable outcome. Activities can include formal or informal work-based learning, short courses, conferences, NVQ modules or university courses. More information is available through the IfA guide - <http://www.archaeologists.net/development/cpd>.

6 A plan for your future: Think of your long-term goal - the ideal job - and consider the career progression or promotion sequence that will get you from your current position to that senior job. You will find the Profiling the Profession series very useful <http://www.archaeologists.net/profession/profiling>.

7 CPD Portfolio - is a useful tool in demonstrating your skills and experience and are a tangible record to show to prospective employers.

CPD Log example

The example overleaf is designed to show the range of activities that can be included in your log. It is dated from January to June. Most of these examples could be achieved within a two to three month period. The second column would normally be linked to your PDP Log but I've used the column here to suggest how specific aims that would be outlined in the PDP Log could be linked to specific activities.

Some practical ideas of extending opportunities for diggers:

There is a link on the IfA web page to [Training Online Resource Centre \(TORC\)](#) and to [Archaeology Abroad](#) and more. On the BAJR website - <http://www.bajr.org/Sitemap.asp> - there is a list of short courses under the heading - '[Training Courses](#) (Training and CPD courses) and grants that individuals can apply for' - '[Funds and Grants](#) (Need funding? Look no further we have collected scores of links to help)'

A future issue will be dedicated to training and provide information on current training schemes, the NVQ system and much more, but we will have training pages in every issue so check this space!



CPD LOG - lots of ideas for you to consider

Name:		Job title:		Period of plan: Jan 2011- June 2011	
Date of update: Dec 2010		Name of mentor:		Name of line manager:	
Dates	Your aim is to?	Learning activity & type	Training provider (if appropriate)	Outcomes and benefits	Follow up
Jan/Feb 2011 30 hours	Do you need to broaden your range of site skills?	Excavation skills; basic surveying; Written, photographic & drawn records; basic processing and conservation of artefacts on site; taking & recording of environmental samples	Please see http://www.bajr.org/Employment/UKTraining.asp	Learn more about the differences and similarities between commercial and a research excavation	Buy the recommended reading and continue home study or consider a week-long course in surveying
Jan - June 2011 2-4 hours per session/task	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Volunteer to take one extra responsibility on each site until you are practised at each site skill and/or take on health and safety responsibilities Relevant reading 	Ask about opportunities - <ul style="list-style-type: none"> A seminar on recording masonry Ask your company about English Heritage training days notes that could be copied and distributed to be discussed as relevant to features on site Visit the local library (wherever you are working) to read local monographs for an understanding of specific local archaeology 	Supervisor on site Self-guided	Development of specific site skills Development of your knowledge of specific types of archaeology	Check online resources for articles, conferences and books for sampling/recording Prepare an application for a specific professional course on this subject Visit local museum
Jan/Feb 2011 22 hours	Do you want to specialise /become an in-house specialist?	Introduction to zooarchaeology, the methods, the potential and limitations of	Please see http://www.bajr.org/Employment/UKTraining.asp	Ability to critically interpret archaeological animal bone data	As above and/or buy the recommended reading and continue home study
April 2011	IfA Registered Organisations send employees to day schools, conferences and seminars	Attend IfA conference session and more conferences - http://www.britarch.ac.uk/briefing/confs.asp	Self-guided	Better understanding of current issues in the profession	Consider joining various professional options - such as Special Interest Groups, conferences, committees etc.
March-June 2011	Would you undertake a small research project?	To present a paper - consider applying to a grant or apply for a small research grant and consider others ways of presenting results - such as an article	http://www.bajr.org/BAJRResources/Funding.asp	Research aims, consideration of evidence types and communicating results	Discuss with a senior professional in that field to discuss follow-on research opportunities

Date of next review: June 2011



Events Diary January-March 2011

Gwilym Williams

In this our first Events Diary we have highlighted a range of national and regional societies and events, however, we'd be grateful if people could send us details of exhibitions, open days, lectures, training events, and other events of interest to members. We're also happy to run any short news pieces that members would like to share. If you have any news, events or dates for the diary then please email the diary editor at gwilymwilliams70@yahoo.co.uk for inclusion in the next issue.

12 January 19h00 **Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies** EDINBURGH (David Hume Tower, George Square) Dr Birgitta Hoffmann *Inchtuthil: new research into the legionary fortress and its surroundings*

18 January 17h30 **Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies** LONDON (Institute of Classical Studies, Room G22/26, South Block, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU) Professor Michael Crawford: *Language, Geography and the Roman conquest of Italy*

26 January 20h00 **The Prehistoric Society** EXETER ([County Hall, Topsham Road Exeter EX2 4QD](#)) Henrietta Quinnell *Later Iron Age ceramics and settlement in south west Britain*

27 January 17h00 **Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies** BANGOR (Council Chamber, Old Arts Building, Bangor University) Dr Jonathan Prag *Fighting for Rome: the first auxiliaries*

10 February 19h30 **Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies** SOUTHAMPTON (Taunton's College) Professor Simon Keay *Rediscovering the 'Imperial Palace' of Portus*

15–16 February *Digital Past 2011 New technologies in heritage, interpretation & outreach* RHYL. Faenol Fawr Country House Hotel, Bodelwyddan, North Wales. Registration cost for the 2 days is £48.00, including lunch and refreshments on both days.

19 February **Mining History** *The archaeology of coal, clay and ironstone*
National Coal Mining Museum for England, Caphouse Colliery, near Wakefield. For more details contact Dr Peter Cloughton, Blaenpant Morfil, nr. Rosebush, Clynderwen, Pembrokeshire, Wales SA66 7RE. Tel/Fax. +44 (0)1437 532578/532921

22 February 20h00 **Cotswold Archaeology** (Gotherington Area Local History Society at Gotherington Village Hall) Neil Holbrook *Where ere you walk*

23 Feb 19h30 **Cotswold Archaeology** (Oakridge History Society at Village Hall, Oakridge) Neil Holbrook *Roman Cotswolds*

26 February **The Prehistoric Society** LONDON (Society of Antiquaries, Burlington House, Piccadilly, London).

[The Iron Age in the Thames Valley](#) £35 (£20 student)

27 February **Society for Medieval Archaeology** LONDON (Museum of London, 150 London Wall London EC2Y 5HN) *Things Medieval: A conference in tribute to Alan Vince. Any profits will be donated to the St. Barnabas Day Hospice, Lincoln, the cause supported by a collection at Alan's funeral. For further details contact [Duncan Brown](#)*

28 February 17h10 **Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies** CARDIFF (Room 0.45, Humanities Building, Colum Drive) Dr Ed Bispham *Rhetoric and Revolution: Public Speaking and the End of the Republic*

2 March **Association for Industrial Archaeology** YORK (Morton Suite, Conference Centre, National Railway Museum, York) Towards an Agenda for the History of the Early Main-Line Railways. *Papers will be available in advance for downloading from the Institute of Railway Studies & Transport History website at www.york.ac.uk/inst/irs/*

7 March 17h30 **Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies** LEEDS (Department of Classics, The University) Dr Katherine Clarke *Marginal Monsters: Redrawing the map of the Ancient World*

15 March 17h30 **Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies** LONDON (Institute of Classical Studies, Room G22/26, South Block, Senate House, Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU) Dr Susan Walker: *Rome in Oxford: new galleries at the Ashmolean Museum*

16 March **Cotswold Archaeology** Bristol and Gloucestershire Archaeological Society, Gloucester. Chiz Harward *The Archaeology of the Wormington to Sapperton pipeline*

16 March 17h00 **Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies** NOTTINGHAM (C6 Department of Classics, University of Nottingham). Professor Greg Woolf *Roman civilisation abroad*

19/20 March **National Museum Wales** CARDIFF *Stoking the Kiln: Medieval and Later Ceramic Research in Wales*

For any further information or queries regarding the conference please contact Alice Forward (Forwarda1@cardiff.ac.uk)

23 March 17h30 **Society for the Promotion of Roman Studies** MANCHESTER (Samuel Alexander Building, Room A7, University of Manchester) Dr Magdalena Öhrman *Slipping the Cable: Departures and Character in Verg. Aen. 4 and 5*

30 March 2011 19h30 **Cotswold Archaeology** CIRENCESTER Boutflour Hall, Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester Kevin Leahy (Portable Antiquities Scheme) *The Anglo-Saxon Staffordshire Treasure*

2 April **Association for Industrial Archaeology** SOUTH WEST & WALES REGIONAL CONFERENCE hosted by Oxford House Industrial History Society (Risca). Advance notice.

24 April **Association for Industrial Archaeology** SERIAC 2010: WINGS, WHEELS & WATER Chertsey, Surrey, the South East Regional Industrial Archaeology Conference hosted by the Surrey Industrial History Group. For details contact Bob Bryson, meetings@sihg.org.uk

IfA Annual Conference and Training Event: *Understanding Significance the key to assessing, managing and explaining the historic environment*



University of Reading, 13 - 15 April 2011

The theme for our 2011 conference is *Understanding Significance*.

The conference will offer a stream of topical lectures updating delegates on current issues, policy and best practice, and new techniques and developments in the profession. They will focus on understanding significance as the key to assessing, managing and explaining the historic environment. In parallel there are practical training workshops developing skills and understanding in a range of subjects and new techniques. Both the lectures and workshops will provide essential CPD opportunities for all practitioners in the sector.

Who should attend

This event provides an excellent CPD opportunity. The sessions and workshops are relevant to all those involved in the historic environment from those entering the profession who wish to learn essential skills and to develop their knowledge of up-to-date policy and practice issues, those who already have a successful careers and are looking to update their knowledge and enhance their skills, those concerned about the future who wish to learn new skills, and those with a keen interest in the historic environment who want to hear about the latest discoveries and partnership working between the profession and the voluntary sector.

Sessions and workshops will include

- **CPD logs, PDPs and training plans** - *Kate Geary, Institute for Archaeologists and Kenneth Aitchison, Landward Research Ltd*
- **Characterisation - where next?** - *Emma Hancocks and Adam Mindykowski, Worcestershire County Council*
- **Southport Group: towards a revitalisation of professional practice** - *Taryn Nixon, Museum of London Archaeology and Chair of the Southport Group*
- **Assessing the significance of iron objects and production remains** - *Evelyne Godfrey*
- **The planning jigsaw: how does it all fit together?** - *Tim Howard, Institute for Archaeologists*
- **Understanding and protection: the application of significance in the Historic Environment and the National Heritage Protection Plan** - *Paul Stamper, Edmund Lee and Charlotte Winter, English Heritage*
- **Assessing significance underwater: just piles of old rocks, geophysical anomalies and shifting sands?** - *Paul Sharman, Orkney Research Centre for Archaeology and Caroline Wickham-Jones, University of Aberdeen*
- **Essential writing skills for archaeologists** - *Alison Taylor, Institute for Archaeologists*
- **Self employment and business start-ups** - *Tariq Mian, Towergate Risk Solutions*



- ***Aren't we all in this together? The importance of partnership working*** - Susan Casey, RCAHMS and Jeff Sanders, Society of Antiquaries of Scotland
- **Assessing significance for planning applications: preparing PPS5 - compliant reports for local authorities** - ***Duncan McCallum, English Heritage and Sandy Kidd, Buckinghamshire County Council***
- **New research possibilities for old finds** - Andrew Jones, IfA Finds Group and Ian Panter, Principal Conservator, York Archaeological Trust
- **Training: promoting best practice** - Archaeology Training Forum
- **Widening the audience for community archaeology: the significance of PPS5** - Austin Ainsworth
- **Highlights in British archaeology** - David Jennings, Oxford Archaeology
- **Visualisation in archaeology** - Garry Gibbons

How to book

For further information about how to book, details about the sessions and workshops, and a detailed timetable for the event please see our website at www.archaeologists.net/conferences. Discounts on bookings apply until **21 March 2011**.

Diggers' Charter

Sadie Watson

Our friend and colleague David Connolly at BAJR has been calling for increased unionisation amongst archaeologists, published in the **Diggers' Charter** (<http://preview.tinyurl.com/388q2am>). The Working Party for Unionisation in British Archaeology was launched at a meeting held in Nottingham and attended by DF committee member Geoff Morley.

We at the DF fully support the ideal of union membership for those at all levels of the profession, and not only at times of trouble. There has traditionally been an assumption that union membership can only serve as an aid to members during times of strife- redundancy or worsening terms and conditions for example - and while it is true that your union should assist you with these situations it can also serve as a positive force for change.

To date the biggest stumbling block has always been a lack of members, especially active ones, although where union membership is strong such as in London the benefits in day-to-day consultation and representation have been great despite a failure to push through increased pay rises (which are largely due to the government vetoing pay rises at MoLA).

Of initial concern to many of us will be the short term benefits of union membership- improving terms and conditions, and tackling issues such as accommodation, pay, and pensions. These can only be approached with a recognisable remit, achieved only when a significant proportion of the profession are union members. Prospect has been asked to re-enter talks with FAME about setting salaries across the industry and this may be one of the best ways to ensure a national approach is taken.

On a local level you should seriously consider joining your union branch at work if there is a recognition agreement with either Prospect, Unite or Unison. If you are more isolated and there isn't an official union branch at work then join the Archaeologists Branch of Prospect, and work with them to improve terms and conditions for you and others.



Found any gold yet?



photograph © MoLA

In the summer of 2000 Joe 'Sev' Severn was working for MoLAS on the huge Roman site of Plantation Place in the City of London when he unearthed a hoard of gold coins buried within the Roman remains. Ten years on he looks back on his big find.

How did you feel when you saw the first coins? How many were there?

"I was using a hoe to clean up a robber cut, I was being fairly heavy handed as it needed a good clean. The spoil was flying when suddenly I noticed a spray of gold in amongst the brown. I'd hit the coins with the corner of the hoe and seven or so had been displaced. You could see the rest poking out of one of the sides of the cut. I couldn't really process what I was seeing for a few seconds. It felt surreal but once I had worked out that they were gold coins and that there seemed to be quite a few of them I felt a real rush of excitement. There were 43 in all, including ones we found in the spoil afterwards. They looked as if they had just been minted, they didn't even appear to have any dirt on them. When I held one in my hand it was pleasingly heavy and felt warm to the

touch. For an instant I thought 'I can see why people kill each other for this shit!'"

As children we're surrounded by stories of searching for treasure -were you always particularly interested in the 'treasure hunting' side of archaeology, or did you consider yourself above such grubby side-shows? Did that attitude change after you made your big find?

"I didn't get into archaeology specifically for the treasure hunting but I'd say I was definitely seduced by the romantic idea of archaeology in general. My Dad used to tell me gripping tales of Schliemann and Howard Carter. Before I found the hoard I would probably have cleaved to the ideal that real archaeologists are above the magpie instinct that delights in gaudy trinkets. Afterwards I have to say that finding them for me was way more exciting than the hundreds of pits and post holes I'd dug in the past. I guess it brought out the grubby treasure seeker in me."

What was the context of the find? What does it tell us?

"They were found to the side of a robber cut so it seems they had probably been hidden down the side of a wall. Further excavation revealed staining, possibly from a pouch. Around this was a rectilinear shape which suggested a box. I forget the dates but they covered a significant portion of the Roman occupation of Britain [AD65–174]. The period they were buried was a time of marked political instability so the theory was that they could have been hidden because of this. They represented a reasonable sum for the time so they were possibly someone's life savings or maybe the capital of a money lender."

How much are they worth? I know the value of the coins was worked out in terms of a legionary soldier's pay (43 months), did you work it out in relation to your own pay? Did it change your opinion on finder's fees or on treasure trove?

"I seem to remember the figure of £80,000 being bandied about. Whilst not an absolute fortune it was still quite a lot of money to an impoverished digger! Am I right in thinking that treasure trove would have entitled me to half



this value? Obviously that would have come in handy. I didn't resent not being entitled to this though. If all archaeologists kept/sold their finds we'd have a hard job learning much about the past."

Did you get any recognition for finding the coins?

"I probably got my 15 minutes of fame. I was interviewed by the BBC, ITV and Channel 4 television news. The coins were mentioned on Blue Peter, surely the very acme of success. Most of the journalists who interviewed me seemed to think that it would massively affect my career whereas of course in reality it made absolutely no difference whatsoever. I often felt, perhaps unfairly, that the Museum of London viewed MoLAS as a grubby, poor relation. In this instance though I felt they did make some effort to include me in the ongoing saga which was nice."

photograph © MoLA



I guess the question you get asked most is 'were you tempted to keep any of them?'

"I really wish I'd kept one. They were beautiful. Unfortunately I squealed like a schoolgirl when I found them and was surrounded by people from that point onwards so keeping one wasn't an option."

Did you find that people treated you differently afterwards?

"Some people made comments of them not being as interesting as things that can tell you more archaeologically, which I guess is fair enough but I always took as being a small case of sour grapes. Most people, both archaeologists and non-archaeologists were genuinely interested. Word seemed to get around the construction workers. I'd go to other

sites and they'd say "you're the guy who didn't keep those coins". I got the feeling they thought I was insane. I think they probably thought most archaeologists were insane once they found out how much money we were on. To be fair they had a point."

Where are the coins now? Do you still think of them?

"As far as I know they're still exhibited in the Museum of London. I don't think about them that often. When I do it feels a bit like it was something that happened to someone else."

How does finding the coins compare to other finds you have made? You worked in London for several years on some pretty major excavations, is gold still the best?

"I would have to say that gold was probably the best. I found working on the Spitalfields cemetery site pretty awesome too though. When we first started excavating the skeletons and they were all kind of rising out of the ground mouths agape it was all very zombie apocalypse. We also found some lovely lead coffins there and the Roman sarcophagus which was incredible too."

What's your advice to anyone finding a coin hoard?

"Nick 'em! Only kidding. Enjoy it I guess."

And are you still an archaeologist?

"No. I left because I felt archaeologists were given a raw deal in terms of pay, conditions and job security. I've probably never worked with a nicer bunch of people though. I miss that and I miss doing something physical, though that could be trying at times. I also found working on archaeological sites in some way better for the soul than working in the purely commercial world."

Have you ever found any treasure? Did you go and dig up someone's garden? Ever found a dinosaur? We'd love to hear from any diggers who have lived the cliché!

Cold weather working: a survival guide

Chiz Harward

Arctic weather hit Britain at the end of November, freezing both the ground and those trying to dig it up. We've put together a few tips for both diggers and supervisors to help you survive the winter –after all, it may keep coming til April!

First off, **do you have to be on site?** Can the work be delayed til more clement weather arrives? Is the weather just so bad that even leaving home is pointless? Your employer should have contingency plans for cold weather and they should let you know what these are and what is expected of you as well as what to do if you get stuck in the snow away from home. Talk to your Project Manager about whether the site must go on and whether any adaptations can be made such as staying in accommodation near site rather than driving in every day.

Communicate with each other and make sure everyone knows what is expected of them and someone at the office knows where you are and where you are heading.

Is that journey really necessary? These days you shouldn't have to resort to tea-lights under the engine to dewax frozen diesel, but do make sure your vehicles are winter ready. If you have to drive, then drive safe and drive slow and watch out for black ice even after the snow is gone.

Driving to work: Check that the roads are open and drive carefully, listen to traffic and weather updates. Make sure both your own



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vehicle and any work vehicles are fit to drive and properly de-iced and de-misted, you've got a survival kit including shovel, FA kit, blanket, food and drink, hi-viz jacket and a fully charged mobile. Anticipate that there may be breakdowns and how you will deal with them.

Make sure that you are provided with **proper welfare facilities:** This should include somewhere to warm up and get out of the weather. On many urban sites water pipes will have frozen or been drained, make sure there are alternative facilities for hand washing and toilets and **hot drinks** are available. With **Oasis** cabins and **Groundhog** units available you shouldn't have to suffer out in the cold, you are also entitled to 'reasonable' temperatures in toilets and changing rooms. Watch out for **fire risks** from clothes put to dry next to heaters and for carbon monoxide or fumes from gas heaters or exhausts.

As a supervisor make sure your colleagues keep warm and aren't suffering, think about having **extra rest breaks** to allow staff to thaw out. The pressure may be on you to carry on, but the company will lose far more money if everyone goes off sick with exhaustion. Make sure risk assessments are updated and give a toolbox talk to staff to ensure that everyone knows where they stand.

Some **medical conditions** such as heart conditions and respiratory diseases may be exacerbated by cold weather so be aware if any staff are on medication. Watch out for

chilblains and frostnip as well as severe shivering which may lead to hypothermia -get the casualty indoors and warm them slowly and seek medical help. Cold can also lead to increased accidents as it is far harder to concentrate and you may be encumbered by bulky clothing.

Keep warm: Get some long johns and use the layer principle to keep warm: take a layer off if you are too warm whilst hacking out that ditch, but put it back on straight away after. Use wicking tops if possible to draw sweat away from your skin, cotton is not good as it becomes cold and clammy. Wear a hat or balaclava –although make sure your hard hat still fits, maybe make some wrist covers and get some ear muffs to keep your extremities warm and prevent heat loss.

Watch out for wind chill: The wind is what will make it feel really cold, and can cause wind-burn by itself.

Proper gloves: gardening/rigger style gloves just don't cut the mustard in really cold weather. Get a range of gloves including thin gloves that you can wear whilst writing or using survey kit: silk liner gloves fit under heavy work gloves. If you are machine watching consider big overmitts as they keep your hands warm whilst inactive, you can keep a pair of thinner gloves on underneath. Tools are cold, especially steel handled shovels, so make sure your hands are warm and stay warm.

Hand cream: Use a decent cream to stop your hands drying out and cracking up. Cracked skin is extremely painful and if the splits are deep they won't heal til the summer. Neutrogena Norwegian Formula is good.

Look after your feet: keep them warm, use two pairs of socks if need be, thin liner socks add warmth for little bulk. Put fresh socks on when you get off site -you don't want trench foot. Wash and pamper your feet every day, you're on them all day so give them some TLC and a nice warm soak.

Mind out for ice and snow-ice: Slips and trips, especially when the ground is covered in snow, are a major cause of accidents. Keep the site tidy and grit or clear walkways.

Cover the site: If the site is small enough you

may be able to use tarpaulins or plastic sheeting. 'Terram' geotextile is especially good. The sheeting will allow you to remove snowfall quickly, and will insulate the ground. If you can't cover it, then sweep up snow before any thaw.

Get a heater! We used a portable space heater to thaw out frozen stratigraphy (and diggers) and it worked a treat. Make sure the main contractor will allow it, and you'll need to do risk assessments, a toolbox talk on how to use it and potential risks would be a good idea. Its well worth the cost as it means that you can actually work! You can get gas or electric –just don't use electric when it is snowing!

Beware of RSI! Mattocking frozen ground is seriously bad for your tendons and hands. Prolonged mattocking of concrete-hard ground is likely to lead to injury and possibly contribute to Repetitive Strain Injury. The same goes for using jackhammers –and of course you have a ticket, method statement and risk assessment to cover their use? Damage to you is likely to be more severe due to the cold. If you have to hack at frozen ground or use a kango, then alternate tasks and take rests.

Go to the caff! If you are in a town then having a sit-down breakfast is warming, good for morale, and will keep you going through the day. You need to eat more in cold weather, especially when working hard, so tuck in!

Use a hankie! In congested welfare huts germs spread amongst the fetid masses huddled round the heater. If you have the pox, then don't give it to everyone else. They won't thank you for it.

Don't be afraid to pack it in: You're archaeologists digging a site, not the Grande Armée retreating from Moscow. If the weather is simply too atrocious then get out of it. You won't get a medal for getting hypothermia.

Stay warm!

Useful links:

<http://www.hse.gov.uk/temperature/information/outdoor.htm>

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/NI1/Newsroom/DG_192874



Tools of the trade: The Quick-hitch

Those of us prone to working in close partnership with 360° excavators on urban sites will be only too used to switching over from bucket, to breaker, and back to bucket as we break our way through slabs and footings. Nowadays many machines come fitted with a quick-hitch of some sort or another - a hydraulic device designed to allow the changeover to take place quickly and easily.



photograph © Chiz Harward

A modern fully-automatic hydraulic quick-hitch

In the old days things were very different (of course). Only a few years ago a watching brief in the badlands of east London involved not only dealing with contaminated ground and fly-tipped (and flying) nappies, but a never-ending cycle of changing buckets the old fashioned way. Before the quick-hitch arrived changing a bucket involved a lot of oil, sweat, complex hand signals and normally a lot of swearing.

The pivot pins securing the bucket to the machine's dipper arm had to be manually driven out of the housings with a sledge hammer and a road pin, then the pins for the breaker had to be smacked back through again. Lining these up required the full

attention of the driver, so the lucky archaeologist was usually left wielding the oil soaked sledge hammer and rusty pin, whilst trying to communicate with the driver to get the holes lined up. It could take an age, twenty minutes was not uncommon. Time, of course, which was never factored in to the budget for the job. Now of course with the flick of a switch its all done for you. Isn't technology wonderful?

Quick-hitches may allow you to swap from bucket to breaker in a few seconds, but they come with issues and risks of their own, and ones that archaeologists need to be aware of. The old 'Direct' method of attaching the bucket to the dipper arm was with hefty pins that weren't going anywhere quick, and were safely secured with a safety pin. The new quick-hitches are more complex and therefore more prone to user error and failure. To archaeologists working in sometimes very close proximity to a machine bucket the implications of that bucket coming off the hitch are only too obvious. Deaths have occurred amongst construction workers from incorrectly secured quick-hitches

Awareness of the plant you are working next to is as imperative for archaeologists as it is for ground workers, so do you know if the hitch on your machine is correctly attached or not? Do you know if it needs a safety pin? -If it is a semi-automatic or manual hitch then it does, but is it there? Is the driver trained in using that specific quick-hitch? And finally, do you need to be working that close to the machine bucket?

There is an excellent online guide available to quick-hitches and their safe use which has been written by The Off-Highway Plant and Resource Centre (OPERC) and is available as a **FREE** download from <http://www.operc.com/downloads/Bookshop/LRGuideQuickHitch.pdf>.

If you work around machines then have a good read of it and make yourself aware of the risks, and of what to look out for next time you are working near a quick-hitch. When that happens then *even if the attachment is not being changed over during your task* have a chat with the driver and foreman to make sure you are happy that the hitch is correctly fitted and the driver knows what he is doing. Your life may depend on it.



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