



BRIGHTON 2018

## WEDNESDAY 25 APRIL

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### SESSION AND PAPER ABSTRACTS

#### 14:00 – 16:00 GROWING YOUR CAREER FROM STUDENT TO POST EXCAVATION ENVIRONMENTAL SPECIALIST

**Organisers:** Colin Forrester, ClfA New Generation Group  
Rebecca Nicholson, ClfA Research and Impact Group

Most modern archaeological fieldwork projects are followed by post-excavation investigations which usually include the assessment, analysis and reporting of various organic components recovered from environmental soil samples and may also include geoarchaeological research. Environmental archaeologists will encounter material from a wide range of periods, terrains and depositional environments and investigations often involve a range of archaeological and scientific techniques. Additionally, digital outputs from various software packages have the potential to present information in a variety of exciting formats, helping to create coherent site narratives.

Whilst the opportunities are considerable, a key challenge is how to transition from student to professional environmental archaeologist or geoarchaeologist working within in a commercial company or research group.

This Fringe event will include papers that demonstrate the following

- academic entry routes into professional environmental archaeology or geoarchaeology
- a view from the profession: what are the key job requirements?
- examples of how volunteering can assist
- how to become a post excavation environmental specialist: examples from those who have made the transition

#### PAPER ABSTRACTS

##### **Environmental processing**

Rebecca Nicholson, Oxford Archaeology

Planning a career path can be daunting especially at the outset, and opportunities can seem few and far between. Although entry at a specialist level will usually require academic credentials – often a post-graduate degree – in a commercial company other career paths and opportunities are possible. At Oxford Archaeology the environmental team includes staff at a range of levels, some who have come through a traditional academic path while others have been trained on the job. This presentation will provide a brief overview of the role of environmental archaeologist within the profession and examine the different roles and pathways to progression within an archaeological company, working largely for commercial clients.

## **Careers in Archaeobotany (the study of seeds, chaff and other macroscopic plant remains)**

Ruth Pelling, Historic England

There are currently more than 30 archaeobotanists working in the commercial archaeology sector in the UK (minimum number based on membership of the Archaeobotany Working Group), in addition to university-based academic staff, PhD and post-doctoral researchers. Specialists are employed within contracting commercial archaeology companies, as free-lancers, national and local authorities, and within universities groups. Career paths into the profession are varied, with botanical or archaeological backgrounds, academic courses or work-based training. This presentation will provide a brief introduction to archaeobotany and associated sciences before presenting data obtained through a survey of members of the Archaeobotanical Working Group, Ruth's personal career background and an overview of the range of current and potential future training opportunities available to early career archaeobotanists.

## **Geoarchaeology**

Dave Norcott, Wessex Archaeology

Geoarchaeology is an increasingly important aspect of the commercial archaeological sector, with projects of many types spanning the Palaeolithic through to the post-Medieval period. This diversity is reflected by the range of backgrounds and routes taken by those working in commercial geoarchaeology today. Based on my experience as both an employee and employer for Wessex Archaeology, I will discuss the range of opportunities available to those seeking to join the profession, and the potential career paths available.

## **A career in specialisation**

Mike Allen, Allen Environmental

I will outline briefly my path to become a free-lance and snail specialist and point out some of the key and important components required, skills to acquire, contacts, some operational clues to be a specialist. Important in this is progressing to a stage where your peers accept you as a component analyst, and the next stage is then to address not them, but your archaeological audience and the archaeological project in the work that you do.

## **ABOUT THE CONTRIBUTORS**

**Rebecca Nicholson** is Environmental Manager at Oxford Archaeology and a specialist in the analysis of fish remains. She has over 25 years' experience of co-ordinating environmental sampling, processing and specialist work, as well as undertaking faunal analyses herself. Having worked in both academic and commercial environments she knows how difficult the transition can be and the variety of routes that can be followed in order to achieve a career in environmental archaeology.

**Ruth Pelling** is the Senior Archaeobotanists at Historic England and coordinator of the Archaeobotanical Work Group. She has over 25 years' experience of working on British and North African plant remains. Having trained and worked with some of the leading professional and academic archaeobotanists in the country, Ruth has had exceptional tutoring her career and now enjoys sharing her knowledge with others through traineeships, teaching and the Archaeobotany Work Group.

**David Norcott** is Senior Technical Manager at Wessex Archaeology. Starting his career as a field archaeologist in the late 90's, David had the opportunity to become familiar with the archaeology of southern Britain over a wide range of areas, periods and geologies, during which time it became apparent that he was at least as fascinated by geological and site formation processes as by the archaeology itself. This culminated in an MSc in Geoarchaeology at Reading in 2005, followed by a full-time move into the Geoarchaeology and Environmental team. Led by David since 2013, the team now

employs around a dozen geoarchaeological and environmental specialists, working on a wide variety of desk- and field-based projects in both terrestrial and marine environments.

**Mike Allen** started his geoarchaeological/environmental archaeological career whilst a schoolboy; working for Martin Bell on his geoarchaeological investigation of the Bishopstone lynchet then South Downs dry valleys. Mike then undertook his own dry valley excavation and land snail analysis whilst an A level student. After BSc and PhD research on geoarchaeology (colluvium and land snails), he worked on Hambledon Hill, his on dry valley research before spending 20 years at Wessex Archaeology setting up their environmental department. For the past 10 years he has worked independently as Allen Environmental Archaeology. He has published numerous papers, excavation reports, and monographs including recently the text book on Molluscs in Archaeology.