



BRIGHTON 2018

## THURSDAY 26 APRIL

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### SESSION AND PAPER ABSTRACTS

#### 9.30 – 13.00 RECONNECTING ARCHAEOLOGY

Organisers: Mark Spanjer, Saixon University  
Rob Lennox, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

If you speak to archaeologists about what attracts them to the discipline, they tend to speak in terms of belonging. They want to be part of the 'tribe' of fellow archaeologists. But there are divisions in our field, which many decry. There is competition, fight for limited jobs and funds. The tribe pulls in different directions for different purposes: Curator and contractor, academic and applied, ClfA member and non-member. Then there are our relationships with the public and with others.

Most of us want less of this division. In general, we agree that 'we' should work together and, for instance, lobby with a strong single voice, but we have acted slowly upon that idea. Experience tells us that breaking down the walls is not a happy, self-rewarding exercise.

This session looks at the 'why' of these divisions. However, in seeking to better understand ourselves and how we might change internally, we will look outwardly at the purpose and ambition of our profession and discipline to see whether there are clues in that which we wish to achieve in the world that could help us reform, refine, and reconnect our tribe.

#### PAPER ABSTRACTS

##### **Reconnecting archaeology: introduction**

Rob Lennox, Policy and Communications Advisor, ClfA

This short introductory paper will set the scene for the session. It will introduce some of the existential questions which the organisers have ruminated on in the development of the session; it will explore briefly the perceived political context for the session, and how it arose, in part, out of the discussion on 'Brexit and Beyond' at ClfA's 2017 conference; and it will pose some key questions to focus debate throughout the morning.

##### **Communicating ideas: the (dis)connections between theory and practice**

Alison Edwards, PhD candidate, University of York

This paper focuses on the role of academia as a generator of new ideas in the heritage sector, particularly on 'critical heritage theory', which has become increasingly focused on the socio-political complexities of archaeology and conservation. As part of an ongoing PhD research project, I plan to investigate how the ideas generated by academia are applicable within the constraints of practice. Is the broad, ambitious scope of theoretical ideas compatible with the financial and practical pressures faced in day-to-day archaeology and conservation work? In particular, I examine how debates around heritage work impact on policy and are applied at local government level. Finally, I ask: are academic concepts communicated across the heritage sector in ways which are useful and accessible

for non-academics, and could better communication between different groups enable more productive discussions?

### **Re-connecting through place**

Gill Hey, Oxford Archaeology, Roger Thomas, Oxford University, and Chris Gosden, University of Oxford

The proposition of this session is that 'we' (the archaeological profession) have become divided and fragmented, to the detriment of what we do. But what is the 'glue' that can, or should, bind us together?

As archaeologists and as citizens, we are all interested in the archaeology of places which are in some sense local to us: the places we live in, work or visit. Of course, this interest is shared by large parts of the public. Even people who are not especially concerned about archaeology in an abstract sense, are usually fascinated by knowing more about their locality: what has been found on their housing estate, or in the centre of their town; who lived there and what their lives were like. By engaging more actively with the archaeology of specific places, can we find common ground which will connect us more strongly, both with each other and with the public? This paper will explore this idea, examining some of the challenges which this poses for development-led archaeology, for universities and for the public sector, but also aiming to highlight the potential of such an approach and some current initiatives.

### **Archaeology in Trust: trusting in archaeologists**

Andy Marvell, Chief Executive, GGAT

Many professional archaeologists are employed by charitable companies, which must deliver public benefit. The Welsh Archaeological Trusts have always maintained a vision that delivering their object should include taking a proactive role in the management and conservation of the historic environment. There have been some influences that caused change of direction, division, and disconnection. The causative 'why' and the consequent impacts inform some lessons to be learned, but there are also others arising from collaboration and co-operation, innovation, engagement, and building-in resilience.

Archaeology depends on public support and trust, hard-earned but easily lost. Working for the public good should be at the centre of what we want to achieve. So, how is this achieved? Do we understand who our users are and what they want? How can we evaluate our impact? How can we ensure that what we do is sustainable and supports the well-being of future generations?

### **A reflection on 21st-century challenges in archaeology**

Jan Wills, Chartered Institute for Archaeologists

In 2017, ClfA and Historic England ran a series of workshops to examine the '21st-century challenges in archaeology'. In addition to the workshop session being held at ClfA conference on Wednesday, this short paper takes the opportunity provided by this critical session to reflect on the conversations which have arisen around the workshops and what they have brought up in terms of the 'state of the profession'. This paper will ask how can we invite more radical thinking about how things [don't] work? And how can we inspire each other and work together to achieve better leadership, strategy, and innovation?

### **The problem with archaeology is archaeologists....**

Neil Redfern, Principle Inspector of Ancient Monuments Yorkshire, Historic England

Archaeology in England is defined by archaeologists, for archaeologists with outputs overwhelmingly for archaeologists. Whilst it may be done under the mask of 'public benefit', in reality our approach to archaeology as a sector is a continuation of the extremely inward-looking approach of PPG 16.

To better reconnect - with each other and the wider society - we actually have to put the wider society first. We need to reassess our purpose and outputs; ask what is our legacy? This paper will explore how we should refocus archaeological endeavour away from delivering the impossible - the current expert-driven, artefact and recording-obsessed process and start letting wider society participate just because it's their stuff and it's good fun. Archaeology is a very creative process - it challenges people to think and it creates cultural understanding and value. If we are serious about reconnecting archaeology, then we need to embrace our creative spirit and use it as the focus our purpose.

### **Why bad things happen to good people**

Mark Spanjer, Lecturer in Archaeology, Saxion University

If archaeologists were soldiers we would learn that defence is stronger than offence. We are not soldiers. And it seems wise to sit and wait when the profession is still economically not strong and the position of archaeology in society reasonable stable. We do our jobs and research; *comme il faut*.

Is this wise? Do we wait for change or leave our positions and go out to look for a different, 'other archaeology'? This contribution will look at a success story of a recent project in the Netherlands, but in retrospect is it still a success? In the changing political climate there is a reasonable chance that our profession will come under threat and our possible allies are not embraced within current archaeology. What we see as threats or irregularities could very well be a pathway to our shared future.