Careers in Archaeology and the Heritage Sector

Level 3: part one

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Careers

- An undergraduate degree in archaeology and its related subjects distinguishes you from other graduates:
  - Mix of humanities and sciences
  - Literacy and numerate skills (data analysis and interpretation)
  - Group-work: in the classroom, lab and field!

- The degree can lead to:
  - A career in Archaeology or the Heritage Sector
  - A career in many other areas (management, business, health sciences, social care and welfare, travel and leisure)
  - A postgraduate qualification for vocational work (MA/MSc e.g. Museums and Art Galleries, Archaeological Field Practice) or further research

- Your AA can act as a Referee as well as helping you compose your CV
What can I do as an archaeologist?

• Private Sector: Commercial Archaeology
  – Units: Field Assistant, Supervisor, Project Manager, Specialist (eg Survey/Post-ex)
  – Independent contractor: Buildings or Landscape Survey, Finds Analysis, Graphics/Illustrations, Environmental Analysis

• Public Sector:
  – National Gov. Agencies (English Heritage, Historic Scotland, CADW, NIEA)
  – Local Government: County and Planning Archaeologists (eg GMAU – responsibility for HER), Historic Landscape Characterisation
  – Community Archaeology
A study undertaken by the Institute for Archaeologists indicates that in 2007, an estimated 6865 people worked in British Archaeology.
Private Sector

• Commercial Archaeological Units, funded through the ‘developer pays’ principle of PPS 5, linked to the planning process
• May also include some community, government or research funded work

Commercial Unit Structures
• Field Assistant (often temporary/rolling contract)
• Project Supervisor
• Project Officer
• Project Manager
• Directors
• Post-ex/Finds/Survey/Environmental

At an experienced level, independent Archaeological Consultants act as advisors to developers
Career paths in the private sector

Advantages
• Engage with archaeology all the time
• Amass rich local knowledge
• Individual responsibility
• Working outdoors/indoors
• Opportunities to work with the local public/outreach activities
• Finding things!

Disadvantages
• Hard, physical work in all weathers and conditions (NB knees!)
• Pressures in the field: time, developer’s schedule, public interest/protest
• Flexibility required (working away from home, long hours)
• Pay: (IfA advised min. £14,197 pa for basic Field Assistant)
• Job insecurity at lowest levels (ie rolling contracts)
You never know what you’ll find… a Viking massacre?

Weymouth Ridgeway – © Oxford Archaeology
How do I get work as a field assistant?

• Dig as much as possible – take the initiative and become familiar with context sheets, section drawing and planning
• Try to get a role as an assistant/supervisor on a research or community dig
• Contact units: send CV, follow-up with a phone call, phone back regularly – be persistent!
• Be prepared to volunteer for a while, to make contacts and impress people with your standard of work
• Join relevant organisations: Institute for Archaeologists, CBA, EH, and period-specific groups e.g. PCRG
• Gain vocational training (IfA Workplace Bursaries)
• Look for vacancies: BAJR (British Archaeological Jobs Resource), IfA Jobs Bulletin, and use local contacts

http://www.bajr.org/
http://www.archaeologists.net/
More specialist career pathways

- Post-excavation manager
- Survey (geophysics, landscape, buildings)
- Environmental Analysis
- Desk-based Assessments/Environmental Impact Assessments
- Graphics/Illustrations
- Databases and digital information
- Finds Specialists (lithics, ceramics, animal or human remains)

Any specialism requires postgraduate and/or placement training e.g. MA or MSc
Careers in Local Government

Roles and responsibilities:

• County and Planning Archaeologists
  – Advise Planning Process of conditions to be placed upon future development
  – Advise Local Government on infrastructural development

• Historic Environment Records Officers
  – Keep records up-to-date
  – Facilitate access to and use of records

• Historic Landscape Characterisation Projects
  – Analyse HLC and characterise using GIS/Databases

• Community Archaeology Officers
  – Co-ordinate Heritage-related initiatives
  – Conduct outreach activities
How do I get work in local government?

- Volunteer (update databases, utilise GIS, help collate research materials etc)
- Make the most of assessment opportunities to use HER resources and become familiar with key legislation and codes of practice (eg DBA, Dissertation)
- A relevant MA may be required
- Join relevant organisations
- Seek vocational training (IfA workshops, short training courses, placements)
- Look for vacancies in BAJR/IfA Jobs Bulletin
National Government Agencies

Roles and responsibilities

- Advisors to the Government and policy co-ordinators
- Curators of Archaeological Resources (eg National Monument Records, Aerial Archaeology Records)
- Care and inspection of sites (eg SAMs)
- Setting of Guidelines and Standards of practice
- Liaise with other institutional bodies (eg CoE)
- Specialist resources: landscape and buildings survey, environmental officers, animal and human remains
- Grant funding for projects (limited!)
- Educational outreach
- Publication
How do I get work with national government agencies?

• Relevant experience in the chosen area is key, alongside strong qualifications
• Ensure you understand key legislation and are aware of current heritage issues
• Undertake placements or voluntary experience to enhance your CV and forge contacts
• Vacancies will be advertised in BAJR/IfA but also on institutional websites
What about a career in academia?

Lecturing at University level: requirements

- BA, MA, PhD
- Post-doctoral position
- Temporary teaching positions (maternity or research leave cover – may be short-term, and require flexible working practice): build a teaching portfolio

Structure

Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Reader, Professor
How do I follow a career in academia?

Be realistic… is it for you? (NB long-term commitment)

- **UG**: obtain a 1st class Hons degree to be able to apply for funding
- Try to distinguish yourself from other candidates by ArcSoc/Peer Mentor roles, original fieldwork, placement activities and prizes/grants
- **PG**: undertake a specialist MA/MSc (aim for a Distinction)
- **PhD**: select a strong topic with publication potential – be professional about progress
- Continue to gain relevant skills training and vocational experience whilst also volunteering for teaching & assessment experience (GTA role)
- Attend conferences, give papers and network!
- **Aim to publish as soon as possible (but aim for quality papers)**
- **Training courses** (eg HEA, H&S, First Aid, Driving)
Other Archaeological Organisations

Various organisations provide professional guidance, act as data managers and repositories, lobby and advocate groups, offer research expertise, or provide educational or media services e.g.

- ADS (Archaeological Data Services)
- CBA (Council for British Archaeology)
- IfA (Institute for Archaeology)
- Societies e.g. Prehistoric Society
- Trusts e.g. YAT (York Archaeological Trust)
- Heritage Lottery Fund
- Media (BBC, National Geographic eg researchers, reporters)
Museums and Heritage

The Museum and Heritage Industry is diverse:

• Visitor services
• Marketing
• Education and Interpretation
• Outreach
• Curators
• Conservation
• Research/Specialisms
How do I get work in museums?

- Develop your transferable skills (social, numerate, oral, visual)
- Volunteer to gain experience of different areas (front of house, archival, galleries display, outreach, conservation): contact kate.clancy@manchester.ac.uk for the Manchester Museum
- Dissertation topic – use to investigate key interests and important issues
- Make sure you are aware of relevant legislation and institutional codes of practice, as well as key issues
- Undertake a relevant MA/MSc
- Use institutional websites as well as BAJR/IfA
The impact of the recession and job cuts

- Oct 2008-April 2009: 10% reduction in archaeological workforce (1 in 6 jobs in commercial archaeology)
- Public sector jobs and Heritage funding, as well as Academia now also seriously under threat due to cuts

*But* opportunities may be created through introduction of new Planning legislation: PPS5 – evaluation of archaeological significance may precede any development

*Important implications:* some infrastructure development is protected (e.g. South/South-east)

Ability to research archaeological presence/absence (archival, documentary, map and survey skills) = vital
How to make yourself more employable *right now!*

- Focus your academic efforts and seek to improve your degree performance
- Join societies, enter competitions for prizes and grants (prestige)
- Attend conferences and seminars
- Volunteer for as much vocational experience as possible
- Try to gain a position of responsibility (e.g., finds assistant, site supervisor)
- Develop a CV before graduation, send it to relevant companies and institutions
- Attend Careers Fairs, Employers Events, PG Workshops
- Develop a personal series of contacts: phone people, introduce yourself, be pro-active! Follow-up on opportunities
- Be prepared to move, be flexible

*Extra-curricular opportunities* e.g., Castell Henllys, Blackden Trust
What do employers want from you?

• Background knowledge
• Willingness to learn and develop
• Ability to take responsibility and take the initiative
• Punctuality, consistency and good presentation (be professional)
• Good general skills (written, oral, graphics, data analysis)
• Detailed care in record keeping e.g. context sheets, plans, archive reports
• Care for your fellow employees (Health & Safety, First Aid, Driving Skills)
• Care for your equipment/kit

*Evidence of all of this! (Skills Passport)*
Writing a CV

• Basic information: personal details, education (degree, A-levels, GCSEs), work experience and key skills, other qualifications

Archaeological CVs

• Include the above but separate out any relevant archaeological or heritage experience and highlight key roles or responsibilities

• Try to vary your experience to show diversity of employment (eg research dig, community project, museum voluntary work, archive placement)

• Indicate the duration of each project (NB 3 months min. experience usually required)
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Personal testimonies – how did I get a job in archaeology?

- The lecturer
- The local government archaeologist
- The contract archaeologist
- The independent consultant
- The finds specialist
Getting a Job

• Telephone enquiries:
  – Be prepared (job reference number, place where you saw it advertised, closing dates)
  – Research background – what does the position involve?
  – What are the required or desired qualifications/experience (do you satisfy these?)
  – Ask for clarification or additional information where relevant
  – What do you need to submit, when, to whom? (CV, Letter of Application, SAE)
  – When and how will you be notified?

NB Ring back if unsuccessful and ask for feedback, and check if there are further opportunities available
Getting a Job

• CV
  – No more than 3 pages
  – List relevant qualifications and experience: most recent first
  – Highlight key skills, linked to evidence
  – Ensure key criteria are listed (eg degree)

• Letter of application
  – Brevity, clarity
  – High quality presentation (eg grammar and spelling)
  – Why are you the right person for this job?
  – Allude to strengths/ambition/new ideas, linked to evidence from previous positions but create a talking point… leave things to discuss at interview
Getting a Job

• Interviews
  – Prepare well beforehand:
    • What does this company/organisation/institution do? What are its key principles, its short and long-term goals, its likely future?
    • What does this particular job entail and how do you fit into the larger whole?
    • Who is involved in the interview? What are they likely to ask?
    • Do you satisfy all the key criteria – if not, what do you bring to the company that is just as important (other skills)?
  – Be punctual, polite, well-presented, affable: don’t be over-eager, over-anxious or over-ambitious
  – *Listen* and answer the question (take your time)
  – Prepare examples to discuss where you have demonstrated key skills (e.g. time keeping, management, mediation, initiative, creativity, responsibility)
  – Ask intelligent questions! (not just about holiday and other benefits!)
Remember…

• We are here to provide transcripts of results (through Administration), references (normally your AA or Dissertation Supervisor) and CV advice

• Also, use the Careers Service (available for several years after graduation)

• Keep in touch with us… let us know what you are doing!