

Forum Dispatch



Newsletter of the Diggers' Forum

Issue No. 3 Winter 2006

Inform. Educate. Debate.

FORUM NEWS

The impact made by Issue No.2 of the Dispatch, which contained several articles from archaeologists reflecting on their career and position within the industry, was notable due to the dichotomy of responses it received. On one extreme, it was criticised for presenting too negative a view of the industry in which we work. In contrast the positive comments received praised the Dispatch for the realistic and fair portrayal of what the majority of professional archaeologists are thinking. In order to present a fair image of the industry and provide a chance for others to respond, and to reflect on why we should have a more positive view of our industry, the first part of this issue is dedicated to the IFA expressing their side of the debate. Prospect's response will follow in the next issue. Paul Everill also provides his response on this topic, in regards to the IFA comment in the previous issue.

The topic of realistic careers, and the potential for future employment in the industry is certainly an issue we need to continually air and continue to push. It is a constant reminder of why we need change, and should provide the motivation among all of us to achieve it.

Elsewhere in this issue we have a full review of the joint Diggers' Forum/Prospect/IFA conference held in June, with a detailed list of the points for progress. In addition, to represent the DF pledge to continually develop greater contacts throughout the archaeological community, we have an article from the organisation RESCUE, with a pledge to help protect our valuable archaeological resource. The back page contains news of recent events and happenings.

'DON'T SPEAK TOO SOON FOR THE WHEEL'S STILL IN SPIN'

The IFA's Continuing Contribution To The Improvement Of Pay And Conditions In Archaeology

It was appropriate that the experience and concerns of archaeologists reported in Issue No.2 of the Forum Dispatch appeared under the title 'TIMES THEY ARE A CHANGING?'. The words of Bob Dylan's protest anthem of the 60s, reflect the fears and frustration of many amongst the current generation of archaeologists – concerns that were clearly expressed in the contributions of C. North, Cat Edwards and Jez Taylor.

This article is written in response to the editor's request for organisations and archaeologists in senior positions to respond setting out what they are doing to remedy the situation. So what is the IFA doing?

In the first instance, it sets minimum salary provisions that are binding upon the IFA's Registered Archaeological Organisations (RAOs). In this way the IFA directly regulates the salaries of over 1,600 archaeologists

employed in over 50 organisations and indirectly influences the pay of those employed by non-RAOs through the widespread acceptance of these minima in the industry.

It is often said that the minima are too low (as aspirational targets they are) and that they provide figures that become enshrined as the going rate (as opposed to a minimum), but these criticisms to some extent miss the point. There has to be a 'lowest common denominator', a bottom line against which one can enforce. That does not, however, mean that the IFA is sanguine over the fact that many of its members are paid at or below that level.

On the contrary, we are working to increase those minima. And we have: from April 2007 the minima must also include set provisions for pensions, sick pay, holiday pay and working hours, or provide financial compensation in line with the table at the end of the article¹. This will be binding on all RAOs and expected of all IFA members who are employers. Principle 5 of the Code of conduct was updated at the 2006 AGM to make this obligation clear.

There also needs to be objective justification of any increase if it is to gain general acceptance. This is where the IFA's work in producing National Occupational Standards comes into its own. These standards chart the necessary performance and knowledge required for a wide range of archaeological tasks in order to show 'what competent

people in a particular occupation should be able to achieve'. More particularly, in the context of pay, it provides a starting point for pay bargaining by benchmarking archaeological skills.

We can use NOS for comparative benchmarking - an exercise to equate the skills and knowledge required by archaeologists with those required by other professions. Only then will it be possible directly to equate, say a finds assistant, with an engineer carrying out tasks requiring comparable skills and experience and, most tellingly, to compare their remuneration. The IFA is delighted to undertake this work, so that we can argue the necessary objective justification for increasing the IFA minima to achieve parity with comparable professions.

Moreover, such research can provide a powerful tool in negotiations about academic, local government and other pay scales. The IFA's involvement in the consideration of pay scales and the place of archaeologists within them is continuing and the aim is to see the end of the days where fieldwork staff are equated to cleaners and unskilled manual workers. Similarly, the talks now taking place between Prospect and SCAUM can only benefit from ongoing benchmarking work.

To those on the ground the work towards better pay and conditions may seem to be painfully slow – as it does to IFA Council and staff - but in fact significant progress has been made and there is more that the IFA and other bodies are committed to do (such as the introduction of the minimum benefits package mentioned above).

There is a wider context to the issue of pay and conditions. Poor remuneration is sometimes seen as a symptom of a failure of the archaeological profession to achieve the standing and respect taken for granted by other professions. Or is it really a symptom of how little we value ourselves? Why do we pay archaeologists so little? Why do we charge clients so little? Why are we prepared to work for such low wages? Consequently, the work of the IFA in establishing greater professional credibility is crucial in any strategy to provide career structure and to improve archaeological pay levels.

In addition to providing a voice for the archaeological profession in government and other circles (for instance, through its links with APPAG, the All Party Parliamentary Archaeology Group), the IFA is involved in the development of the profession in a wide variety of ways. The validation of individual members (as Practitioners, Associates and Members) provides a basic framework for career progression, demonstrating different levels of technical competence and responsibility, and this is being

taken forward by a number of means. The development of the IFA's Continuing Professional Development scheme will be taken to a new level when on-line recording of CPD is introduced. Furthermore, training opportunities have been and continue to be provided through the highly successful workplace bursary scheme and will be provided with the introduction of the Qualification in Archaeological Practice, a vocational qualification which will accredit skills and experience gained in the workplace.

We have not yet reached our objective of pay and conditions truly reflecting the skills and experience of our members, but the wheels are in motion and much has already been done to lay the foundations of a proper career and pay structure. One key initiative is to make sure that IFA registration is widely recognised (by planners, developers and government) as essential benchmarks for of quality. For example if it becomes necessary (commercially or to comply with planning conditions) for organisations to be registered, the IFA will have vastly increased ability to drive up pay and conditions. But that is a subject for another article.

It is up to us, and to everyone involved in archaeology, to keep the profession moving forward.

Tim Howard, IFA Recruitment and Marketing Co-ordinator

If you wish to discuss any of the issues in this article, please feel free to contact Tim Howard - 0118 378 6446 or at tim.howard@archaeologists.net

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	PIFA	AIFA	MIFA
minimum salary recommendations	£13,856	£16,139	£20,898
no employer pension contribution (+6%)	+£831 pa	+£968 pa	+£1254 pa
per additional hour above 37.5 hpw	+£374 pa	+£436 pa	+£565 pa
shortfall in annual leave requirement: per day	+£53 pa	+£62 pa	+£80 pa
no sick leave allowance (basis: min. 1 month full pay)	+£1155 pa	+£1345 pa	+£1742 pa



JOINT ARCHAEOLOGICAL CONFERENCE REVIEW

In view of the success of the Diggers' Forum session at the IFA's Edinburgh conference in April, and the continual feedback the Forum committee was receiving from members and non-members alike, it was decided that the Diggers' Forum would maintain the momentum for change by organising an additional conference titled: '*Change in archaeology; it's up to us*', a joint venture between the Diggers' Forum, the IFA, and Prospect trade union, with each providing speakers. It was held at the Museum of London on Saturday 3rd of June, with the aim of enlisting more support and resources.

The main focus of the day was tackling key issues confronting professional archaeologists on a daily basis, namely those concerning professional development, for example, issues influencing an individual's decision to remain within the industry or leave for greener pastures. These topics have been approached before, without any great measure of success. The flaw in many of these previous attempts is that they omitted archaeologists who would most benefit from the discussion. In recognition of this flaw, the conference was specifically designed to address individuals who would benefit directly.

Antony Francis, Chair of the Museum of London branch of Prospect, opened the first session, which dealt with the current deplorable state of pay and conditions. It highlighted archaeologists facing disadvantages in pay, particularly those at the point of entering the industry. The environment of competitive tendering in which professional archaeology operates does not encourage the greater reward of employees, with IFA pay guidelines set far too low. However, positive moves are afoot by bodies such as the IFA and Prospect to generate changes in pay and the working environment. It is strongly emphasised that more archaeologists need to play their part by putting pressure on the decision makers in order for such moves to be successful.

John Walker, representing the Standing Conference of Archaeological Unit Managers (SCAUM), and **Dave Allen**, Prospect Archaeological Branch Negotiator, led the next session, which concerned the current state of negotiations between the two organisations, which are focused on establishing minimum pay and conditions for units represented by SCAUM. Both speakers had a positive view of the negotiations, and having a single organisation provide a platform for two groups on either side of the equation helped enable a more efficient path of discussion. The benefits of a successful outcome are obvious to all sides.

Kate Geary took the lead in the next session to talk about the lack of training available to archaeologists. A priority for vocational qualifications was discussed, for assessing and accrediting skills gained within the industry. The main focus of the debate was the role of Continuing Professional Development (CPD) in helping individuals develop new skills, and the possibility of CPD becoming compulsory for IFA members. This would bring much-needed advantages to people in their archaeological career.

Dave Allen discussed the role of union membership. The aims and benefits of Prospect membership were highlighted, with Dave Allen calling for further cooperation between archaeologists to achieve changes in pay and the workplace. The union role promoting positive industrial relations was also mentioned, especially in relation to union recognised workplaces.

Tim Howard, Recruitment and Marketing Officer at the IFA, introduced the issue of barriers to entry within the industry. As part of this highly charged topic, both the benefits and potential drawbacks were aired, along with how Chartered status could be achieved and its full implications. It was indicated that Chartered status would not necessarily bring about barriers to entry. The IFA are hoping to spearhead progress towards Chartered status as the industry's professional body.

Kate Geary, Training and Standards Coordinator at the IFA, continued the session on pay and conditions by discussing the how the IFA minimum salaries are calculated, and identifying where improvements could lie. In addition to this, other benefits such as pensions, length of the working week, annual leave allowances and sick pay were also identified. A package incorporating such benefits could be significant in raising the stand of living for many archaeologists. It was indicated that the IFA were looking to have their Registered Archaeological Organisations introduce these type of benefits. The closing debate reviewed all that had been previously heard, and focused the discussion on the issues the participants felt

required immediate attention. Nine action points were raised, three for each of the bodies, which were:

IFA

- Pay – raise recommended minimum salary levels and commit to a timetable to do this. Consider including London weighting in recommended wage levels
- New PPS – lobby for the successor guidance to PPG16 to include a recommendation that developers employ RAOs
- Raise profile of archaeologists outside the profession.

Prospect

- Continue negotiations with SCAUM over pay and conditions
- Devise a benchmarked salary for archaeologists, using information from the IFA and elsewhere – eg the job evaluation process starting at MoLAS soon
- Build up recruitment and improve communications with archaeologist members, with better information.

Diggers' Forum

- Improve communication with DF members, eg through newsletter and website
- Conduct a campaign about pay and conditions (one delegate suggested a petition sent to the press)
- Recruit people to the DF, and coordinate a group recruitment campaign (ie for Prospect and IFA, as well as DF).

The Diggers' Forum already anticipates organising another conference within 12 months to review the progress of the action points agreed upon.

Chris Clarke, Diggers' Forum Chair

RESCUE - The British Archaeological Trust

RESCUE is one of the longest-standing organisations campaigning for the interests of archaeology and archaeologists, although sadly it seems we often fail to achieve the same public and professional profile as (for example) the IFA or the CBA. However, we were founded in 1971 - long before the former, and were campaigning nationally to raise the profile of archaeology when the CBA was still a primarily regional organisation.

We exist to promote the interests of archaeology in Britain and campaign to maintain the position of archaeology as a vital part of the nation's cultural life. Our membership is drawn widely from both the professional and amateur/voluntary wings of the discipline, and as a membership organisation we depend upon subscriptions and occasional donations to support our work. We have only one part-time employee and the Rescue Council is drawn entirely from working archaeologists and active amateurs. We believe that this gives us a unique insight into the wide range of issues that affect archaeology and thus put us in a position of being able to campaign on issues with which we are dealing on a day-to-day basis.

The scope of our work is wide. We respond regularly to discussion and consultation documents emerging from government and elsewhere, and all our responses are posted on our website (www.rescue-archaeology.freemove.co.uk). In formulating these responses we are motivated by a number of principles;

- Archaeology provides a unique and important way of understanding the past and, by extension, the present;
- Archaeology has both a cultural and a political role to play in the modern world;
- As practitioners of archaeology we have a right to make our views known regarding the position of our discipline in respect of current issues;
- As practitioners of archaeology we have a right to receive appropriate pay and work under acceptable conditions.

These same principles motivate our more direct campaigning activities. We regularly lobby local councillors, MPs, MSP and Assembly Members when archaeological sites are under threat or when archaeologists and museum staff are threatened with redundancy as a result of privatisation, the 'downsizing' of heritage services or when curatorial services are threatened, and we are frequent correspondents with the national press. We may lose some of these campaigns but we have never yet conceded the point that these are vital services that require proper maintenance and support, and wherever we have commented, we try to make sure that what may appear locally to be a politically "easy target", becomes an issue for discussion – sometimes on a regional or national basis. We are not a Trades Union but nor are we a 'professional organisation' and this, together with our financial independence from any grant giving or other official body, gives us the latitude to campaign without 'fear or favour' on those issues that we understand our members to be concerned with.

We maintain a website and also publish RESCUE NEWS three times a year, which is provided free to our members. This gives us a means of communicating our concerns and our campaigns to our membership and also to journalists and politicians who we feel may support our position. RESCUE NEWS also keeps our membership informed as to the important issues current in archaeology, and gives everyone the opportunity to highlight and express their own concerns.

Do **you** believe archaeology is worth fighting for? We always welcome new members, and would appreciate **your** support. Annual membership costs £15.00 (£8.00 for full or part-time students) and we are always looking for members who are willing to stand for election to the Rescue Council and become more directly involved in our lobbying and advocacy work.

Chris Cumberpatch, RESCUE Secretary and **Tony Howe**, RESCUE Council

We can be contacted by e-mail at rescue@rescue-archaeology.freeserve.co.uk, by telephone (01992 553377) or by post at

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THE “INVISIBLE DIGGERS” – AN ASSESSMENT OF THE PROFESSION

Following the articles in the last issue of Forum Despatch, which outlined the concerns of field archaeologists at all stages of their career, it seemed an appropriate time to raise some of the issues that have come out of my research. As many ‘Diggers Forum’ members will be aware I am currently in the final stages of my PhD, in which I am utilising a number of quantitative and qualitative techniques to analyse the current situation in ‘commercial’ archaeology. Elements of this article are taken from my forthcoming paper in a book entitled “Archaeology and Capitalism: From ethics to politics”, which, I gather, is due out this Spring. The online survey component provides an alternative view of the profession to that provided by the IFA studies ‘Profiling the Profession’ (1999) and ‘Archaeology Labour Market Intelligence: Profiling the Profession 2002/3’ (2003). Rather than contacting units and asking for data I instead specifically advertised for respondents in ‘The Digger’ and online at David Connolly’s ‘British Archaeological Jobs Resource’ (BAJR) website. When it closed in June 2005 my online survey had received responses from an

estimated 15.67% of UK site staff. This is a statistically significant response rate to the extent that my figures have a margin of error of plus or minus 5 percent at a 95 percent level of confidence. (e.g. if 50% of my sample answer ‘very good’ to a question then you can be 95% sure that the true answer lies between 45% and 55%).

80% of my respondents are aged between 20-40, compared to the IFA’s most recent figure of 66%. It may be that younger staff were more motivated to take part in my survey, though I strongly suspect that this is also a reflection of an under-representation of the under 40s (and more particularly the under 30s) in the IFA study. Although my results suggest that 35.6% of site staff are female – almost identical to the IFA’s 2003 figure of 35.5% - the results, as shown in Figure 1, indicate that actually there are more female than male staff in the 21-25 age group. The number of female contract archaeologists falls at a fairly constant rate from the early twenties to the mid thirties before beginning to level off. The figures for male staff, by contrast, fall off most markedly from the early forties.

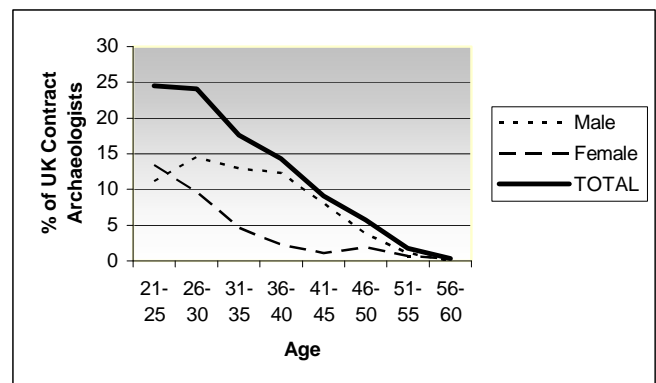


Figure 1: Gender differentiation across the age groups of UK archaeologists. Data from the ‘Invisible Diggers’ project

In terms of experience in the field, Figure 2 demonstrates the noticeable fall in staff numbers after five years (which correlates to the number leaving the profession in their late twenties - shown in Figure 1). This is also borne out in my qualitative interviews with current and ex-contract archaeologists that indicate that staff become disillusioned with the pay, conditions of employment and the general level of respect they receive. After about five years experience there is a widespread tendency to re-examine their careers and this is when many opt to leave the profession in favour of a more stable, better paid career - despite still having a passion for archaeology. It is interesting, however, to note the obvious increase, against the general trend, at the 16-20 year experience bracket which I believe is directly related to the influx of staff through the Manpower Services Commission in the mid to late 1980s and the fact that a significant number of this body of people have managed to maintain employment

and their interest in the job despite the obvious difficulties that are associated with it.

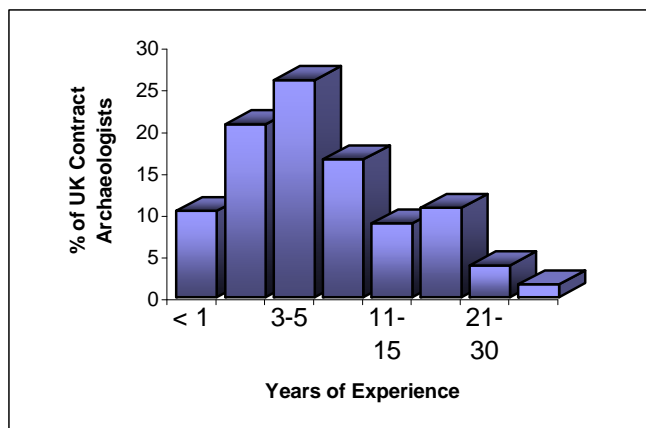


Figure 2: Field experience amongst UK archaeologists. Data from the 'Invisible Diggers' project.

The combined effects of commercial values (including the apparent separation of excavation from interpretation), inadequate fieldwork training in universities and what might be described as a 'labouring sub-culture' amongst many site staff result in something that many do not consider to be a 'proper job'. During my research I have conducted qualitative interviews with a number of commercial archaeologists, including one who had recently been appointed to a curatorial post. Having spent almost two decades working his way up the profession he had a number of interesting insights into it.

Participant: But it has to be said you're not going to get rich as an archaeologist. It's a lifestyle choice. Doesn't mean you have to be underpaid to do it, but be realistic. There are only so many counties in Britain. There are only so many units in Britain, so there are only x amount of jobs. It cannot expand exponentially. It's at saturation point as it is so I would say to 85% of diggers, you know, accept it. Enjoy your three or four years as a digger, or five years as a digger. Use it, have a good life, smoke lots of drugs, drink lots of drink, get off with either women or men or both. Go abroad. And then get a proper job. If you're lucky and really want to be an archaeologist for the rest of your life then you'll make it. I mean, 22 years I waited to get where I am and who knows how long I'll be an archaeologist. I mean I'm never going to give it up. Absolutely not.

The same interview participant had also noticed a number of changes in the nature of site staff in recent years and apportioned the blame equally between poor university training, the failure of commercial units to invest in their staff and the apparent lack of interest amongst many Diggers. This might sound like a harsh assessment to those of us dedicated and professional staff, but it does

reflect the brutal realities of the job. In many respects it is a vocation rather than the 'recognised profession' that the IFA and many unit managers like to advertise, but this is no excuse to keep wages low. My research indicates very strongly that we do the job because of a love for it, for the camaraderie and for the lifestyle, yet it is undeniable that poor pay and unstable employment prospects ARE driving talented people out of the profession.

My online survey indicates that around 75% believe that the profession is already in crisis and clearly it is time that the governing bodies act to reverse this. I am sure we would all like to see the IFA take a lead in this and I wait with interest to see what response the current discussion in the Forum Despatch will instigate.

Paul Everill, University of Southampton

NEWS SHORTS

■ On the 13th September Prospect Archaeology Branch Annual General Meeting took place at Prospect House, to both review the activities of the branch over the past year and look to establish the foundations for a further year's achievement. The positions of Branch Treasurer and Organiser were filled, with a motion for greater support for Union Learning Reps unanimously passed. Review of the years activities included the achievements of the Joint Conference for Change on June 3rd, and the establishment of the London Prospect Reps Group. This is in addition to the gains made during the Prospect/SCAUM negotiations. The issues of membership retention and membership recruitment were both raised, and noted to be of prime importance to take action on. The committee positions of Chair and Secretary are yet to be filled. Any Prospect Archaeological Branch members interested in greater involvement through the Branch committee are asked to contact Chris Clarke at the e-mail address below.

■ Two highly beneficial changes to the Institute of Field Archaeologist's (IFA) minima pay scales have recently been voted through by the IFA council, supported by Diggers' Forum members. The first change means those archaeologists at, or just above, the minimum pay level will fall into the lower pay bracket in regards to the subscription rate they pay. This makes sure IFA membership is at the best value possible for those struggling on the base wage in archaeology. The second change will come with the implementation of the recommendations from the IFA minima pay levels review, from April 2007. After consultation with the IFA Registered Archaeological Organisations, the decision to modify the pay minima in regards to access to sick pay, pension and holiday entitlements was made. See the IFA website www.archaeologists.net for more information.

■ York was the venue on the 10th September for the BAJR:06 Conference, organised by David Connolly of the British Archaeological Jobs Resource website. The day conference had a full schedule, covering a range of issues prominent in today's industry. The papers presented covered topics from the accessibility of archaeology for those with disabilities, government policy and archaeology, through to the debt burden of newly graduated archaeologists. The material was presented by archaeologists with a variety of backgrounds from consultants to freelancers. The day prompted much discussion and debate, which could have easily run long into the evening. Hopefully, all who attended went away with a fresh perspective on the components that comprise modern archaeological environment. For more details go to www.bajr.org.

■ There are now 4 bursaries in place under the IFA's Heritage Lottery funded scheme. In addition to the current placements with RCAHMS, English Heritage, ADS and the University of Winchester, an appointment is shortly to be made with Worcestershire County Council. The IFA will be offering between 8 and 10 workplace learning bursaries every year for the next 4 years. In addition the IFA are about to launch the Qualification in Archaeological Practice, a vocational qualification which will accredit skills and experience gained in the workplace.

■ The DF has recently spearheaded talks between Prospect, the IFA, and BAJR to discuss how to further engage archaeological unit managers with the current push for change within the industry. The discussions are only at a provisional stage, but a mission statement is being drafted to guide the process, with the aim of establishing a campaign for change early next year.

■ The Norfolk County Council Unit, based in Norwich, has recently been taken over and privatised by NPS (formerly Norfolk Property Services), and trading under the new name NAU Archaeology. The public services union Unison made sure the transition was made with the employees' employment rights remaining intact. NAU Archaeology is now looking to expand the geographical area in which it works and is looking to compete in areas outside of Norfolk. Is this a pattern that other County Councils may follow as they come under greater financial pressures and scrutiny?

■ The 25th Anniversary IFA Annual Conference will be held at Reading between the 2nd and the 4th April, 2007. The DF will be running a session on issues relating to training within the industry and are currently looking for suitable paper topics. If you have an idea for a paper then please contact us here at the Diggers' Forum.

■ IFA membership levels have increased by over 10% during the first 9 months of 2006. Membership numbers now stand at 2,285 members, in association with 51 Registered Archaeological Organisations (RAOs).

▣ If any of these News Shorts (or anything else discussed in the newsletter) has made you want to comment, question, or provide a perspective, then we want to hear from you. We are keen to publish material that generates further debate. Contact details below.

! Please could Forum members and others on the Forum email lists, inform Jez Taylor if their email address has changed.

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The Diggers' Forum is a Special Interest Group of the IFA

