

Jobs in British archaeology 1995

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IFA members, and many non-members, will need no convincing of the value of the IFA Jobs Information Service, and Aitchison and Anderson's recent *TFA* article (*Jobs in British archaeology 1993/4*, *TFA* 22) shows how useful the JIS can be as a barometer of British archaeological jobs. The story for 1995 generally follows the previous pattern of declining numbers of adverts and generally poor pay, but other patterns are also beginning to emerge.

Methodology

The information was recovered and analysed in much the same way as the 1993-94 data, with a few significant changes. The Heritage Education Officer category was dropped, and three major amalgamations took place: Junior SMR was joined with Assistant Inspector and Monuments Warden to form Junior SMR/CRM; Finds Worker, Environmental Archaeologist and Conservator were treated as a single group; and Surveyor was joined with Illustrator/Designer. In order to enable direct comparisons, the 1994 details were adjusted to form the same groups.

Major comparisons

Similar comparisons were made to last year, including overall numbers; terminology; pay; private/public bodies; contract length; IFA membership; and accommodation. Comparisons between the various job categories are shown on Table 1, and Table 2 compares average minimum pay between 1994 and 1995.

Job numbers

The number of usable jobs fell sharply from 186 in 1994 to just 150 in 1995. This compares with 215 in 1993, a decline of 30%. Although 21 ads indicated an unspecified plural number of jobs, these have been treated as single jobs for the purposes of this exercise. One or two ads which were followed up (and not subsequently used) were not for 'real'

jobs at all, but turned out to be fishing exercises for future reference. These were all in the private sector, and may have led to many disappointed applicants.

Terminology

There is still no clear consensus on how to describe archaeological jobs. The word 'archaeologist', for instance, is used to describe anything from an excavator or supervisor to a senior SMR officer.

Pay (Table 2)

The level of pay of qualified and experienced archaeologists is still appallingly low, and the overall pattern is of a small decline (4%) in 1995 (but still well up from 1993). Pay for field staff was fairly static, with the exception of Project Managers, whose mean starting pay rose by 10%. Similarly, senior CRM staff were offered significantly more (19%). Both these rises could be interpreted as reflecting the greater responsibility and recognition of such posts, but the sample is too small for meaningful conclusions. The starting salaries of post-excavation support staff also rose well (9%), but the mean of just £12,647 is still far from ideal.

Private/public bodies

A smaller proportion of advertisements were from private organisations, with a tendency for these to be for more senior posts. This may reflect the trend of job-seekers applying direct to employers, obviating the need to advertise and also saving costs.

Contract length

Once again, there is a clear pattern of longer contracts for more senior posts. Where given, the length of contract for field staff was a meagre 6 months or less, while CRM and support staff could luxuriate for 9 months on average. With contracts of such short duration, the surprise is that anyone is dedicated (or desperate) enough to accept such a

degree of job insecurity.

IFA membership

A major disappointment has been the very low incidence of advertisements mentioning the IFA, just 11 out of 150 jobs. It is known that IFA membership is considered to be advantageous in many job descriptions, and the absence of mention in published ads may simply be to cut costs.

Accommodation

Not a single advertisement in the 1995 survey mentioned the prospect of free or subsidised accommodation. This contrasts with 1993, when this was available to 46% of excavators, and with 1994 when 31% of diggers were offered help in this crucial area. Providing accommodation adds a significant administrative burden to any project, and it would appear that project managers prefer to focus on different areas, leaving the most vulnerable sector of the archaeological profession to fend for itself.

Conclusions

The grim picture painted by Aitchison and Anderson for 1993-4 seems even grimmer for 1995. There were fewer advertisements, for fewer jobs, on average offering less pay and no more job security. Recent articles in *TFA* (eg the quality of work survey, *TFA* 24) have drawn the same conclusions, but in a free market, there are no easy solutions. Archaeologists have still not shaken off the legacy of their roots in the 1970s volunteer culture, and are still very much the poor relation of other professions. Unless archaeologists begin to value themselves more highly and acquire the skills to manage and market themselves properly, then the profession will find it hard to get out of the rut it has dug for itself. Perhaps the establishment of IFA corporate membership will be the catalyst we need: watch this space for the results of the 1996 JIS survey.

Table 1 : jobs in British archaeology, 1995 summary

<i>Category 1:</i>	<i>Number of jobs</i>	<i>Mean starting pay</i>	<i>Min. starting pay</i>	<i>Max. starting pay</i>	<i>Private bodies</i>	<i>Temporary contracts</i>	<i>Mean contract length</i>	<i>Mention IFA</i>	<i>Mention accommodation</i>
Excavator	22	8597	7192	13542	27%	100%	3.5m	0%	0%
Site Assistant	9	9524	8645	12743	12%	89%	2.5m	0%	0%
Assistant Supervisor	3	10902	9842	13023	0%	100%	2m	33%	0%
Supervisor	22	11911	10452	12915	9%	86%	4.5m	0%	0%
Field Officer	16	13616	11510	15458	25%	69%	6m	6%	-
Project Manager	8	18094	15500	22350	62%	0%	-	25%	-
Junior SMR/CRM	31	11656	8133	14637	16%	61%	9m	10%	-
Senior SMR/CRM	8	15030	12500	18000	37%	37%	28m	13%	-
Unit Manager	3	24863	18589	36000	33%	0%	-	33%	-
Finds, Environmental or Conservation	18	12647	9399	14600	6%	44%	9m	11%	-
Illustrator, Designer or Surveyor	10	11820	10587	13635	40%	60%	9.5m	10%	-

Table 2 : jobs in British archaeology: comparison of pay, 1994/95

		<i>Pay 1994</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>Change</i>	<i>No. of jobs 1994</i>	<i>1995</i>	<i>Change</i>
FIELD POSTS	Excavator	8741	8597	-2%	13	22	+69%
	Site Assistant	9615	9524	-1%	8	9	+12%
	Asst. Superv.	10766	10902	+1%	4	3	-25%
	Supervisor	11743	11911	+1%	22	22	0%
	Field Officer	13637	13616	0%	21	16	-24%
	Project Manager	16450	18094	+10%	18	8	-56%
CRM POSTS	Junior CRM/SMR	11285	11656	+3%	24	31	+29%
	Senior CRM/SMR	12641	15030	+19%	9	8	-11%
	CRM/Unit Mgr	25671	24863	-3%	8	3	-62%
SUPPORT POSTS	Finds/Enviro/Cons	11605	12647	+9%	15	18	+20%
	Illustr/Designer/Surv	12021	11820	-2%	10	10	0%
MEAN/TOTAL		12666	12228	-4%	186	150	-19%

Copies of the secondary data on which this paper has been based can be obtained through the IFA Secretariat, on submission of an SAE. For details of the IFA Jobs Information Service, contact Lynne Bevan, JIS, Institute of Field Archaeologists, The University of Birmingham, Edgbaston, BIRMINGHAM B15 2TT