

Jobs in British archaeology 1996

Robin Turner

This is the third successive article on advertised jobs in British archaeology, covering the four years from 1993 (see Aitchison and Anderson 1994 and Turner 1995). The continuation of the series was one of the recommendations of the IFA Archaeological Employment in Britain Working Party (Schaaf 1996), and is seen as a useful barometer of the employment market. Last year's decline in the number of job adverts has now flattened out, and overall pay has increased in line with other jobs. However, this apparent underlying stability hides several major fluctuations within the data.

Methodology

The data collection methodology used was identical to that used for 1995, so direct comparisons can be made (Tables 1a and 2). One major change instigated in 1996 cannot be used for comparison purposes until a second year of data becomes available: whereas in the past the data came only from published adverts, additional data in 1996 were recorded. This was obtained by following up those adverts which either did not specify salary (which would formerly have been ignored), and those where more than one job was advertised, but the number of jobs was not specified (which would have been counted as a single job). These enhanced data are shown on Table 1b, and mainly affect the numbers of lower-paid jobs, thereby reducing the average starting salary figure. A few ads where phone numbers were not given and details were not easily obtainable were still not followed up, but it is now felt that the vast majority of publicly advertised jobs were caught.

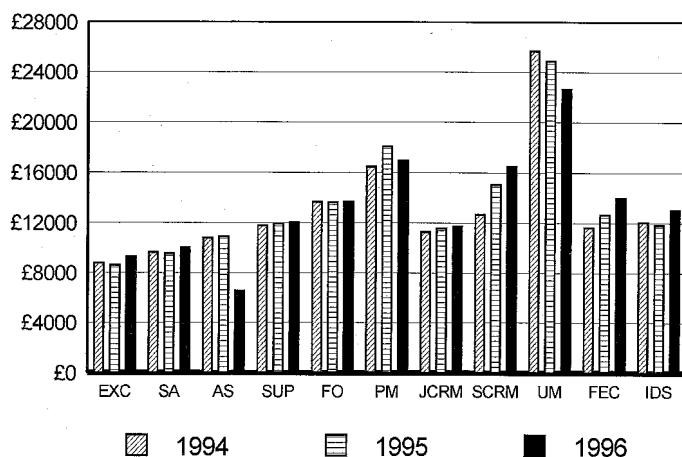


Fig.1 Jobs in British archaeology: comparison of mean pay, 1994-1996. For abbreviations see Table 1a.

Comparisons

The following general comparisons relate to the data on Tables 1a and 2.

Job numbers

The 154 usable jobs compares favourably with the 150 in 1995, but falls well short of the 215 in 1993. There was a marked increase (74%) in the number of Excavator/Site Assistant jobs, but a commensurate decline (68%) at supervisory level. It is tempting to think that this might indicate promotion from the ranks. The other major change was seen at Senior CRM/SMR level, the number of advertised jobs almost tripling. To some extent this was caused by the establishment of new posts following local government reorganisation.

Pay

A slight increase of 3%, in line with national trends, brought average starting pay back to the level seen in 1994, which is nevertheless disappointing. On average, low-paid field staff saw a slight rise in pay, but the most notable increase was for support posts, both categories of which saw a 10% rise. A similar rise for Senior CRM/SMR posts, when coupled with the increase in 1995, makes a healthy two-year rise of over 30%: could this be attributed to the growing recognition of the importance of these posts in local government following the PPGs?

The prize for the highest-paid job in the survey goes to the IFA, at £25,000. The booby prize goes to the National Trust SMR Assistant post at £6,400, closely followed by the Finds Supervisor post at

Fishbourne Roman Palace at £6,550.

The mean overall pay of £12,620 remains way below the national average, and is over £2,000 less than the average manual worker (as at April 1996; NES 1996). The majority of archaeologists are paid on local government

APT&C grades or equivalents, the average of which (exclusive of overtime and perks) for England and Wales was as much as £19,595 for the survey period (NES 1996): only six jobs in the 1996 survey had starting salaries above this average!

On a more modest level, we find that the recommendations of the IFA's Working Party for minimum starting salaries (Schaaf 1996 13) were not unduly off the mark for most senior field staff, but the majority of excavators did not reach the Scale 2 minimum of £10,194 (November 1996). The average Junior CRM/SMR post reached the AIFA minimum, as did most senior equivalents. The published recommendations therefore seem to be a good guide, which employers should be encouraged to use for *minimum* starting salaries: PIFA type posts = APT&C Scale 2 (£10,194+); AIFA = Scale 4 (£11,874+); and MIFA = Scale 6 (£15,375+). (Data from IDS 1996)

Private bodies

Non-public bodies advertised for just 18% of jobs, confirming the previous trend and indicating that most recruitment in the private sector is by other means.

Contracts

The predictable trend of longer contracts for more senior posts continues, but the average initial contract for field staff has, where specified, fallen to less than 2 months for supervisors and below. Conversely, support staff contracts increased to an average of more than a year. The trend seems to be for less stability in the field, but a more reliable stream of work for post-excavation staff.

IFA Membership

The introduction of Corporate Membership of the IFA had no noticeable effect on the number of adverts in which the IFA was mentioned. IFA Membership was specifically mentioned in two-thirds of the Field Officer ads, but only a quarter of those for Senior CRM/SMR. It may be that excavating units see IFA Membership as an advantage on the field staff résumé normally included in tender documents.

Accommodation

All 20 field posts where accommodation was offered were advertised by the Central Archaeology Service (of English Heritage), which may be designed to compensate for

their lower than average pay for junior field staff. The 'perk' of free or subsidised accommodation now seems largely to be a thing of the past.

Career in archaeology?

Accepting that we are only looking at a small proportion (perhaps 20-30%) of the actual number of newly occupied positions, some useful messages nevertheless seem to be coming through. If you want to work as an excavator, a mobile home would be handy, but don't wait for jobs to be advertised - you'll have to seek them out for yourself. If you have a more senior field post, cling on to it: you'll be lucky to see another one advertised. Things are generally slightly better in the CRM/SMR market, but jobs are still few and far between.

Something which cannot come out from the survey but which will be familiar to most archaeological managers, is the increase in requests from new graduates for work experience or voluntary positions. Already a fact of life in many allied disciplines, this increasing trend of unpaid apprenticeship will probably do the trick by giving people an advantage in getting their first paid job, but how should we react as a profession?

The past four years of analysing JIS ads has shown that most people looking for a career in archaeology are more likely to career in archaeology, that is 'to move rapidly, out of control'.

ROBIN TURNER

The National Trust for Scotland
Received January 1997

Copies of the secondary data on which this paper is based can be obtained from the IFA Secretariat, on submission of an A4 SAE.

REFERENCES

- Aitchison, K R and Anderson, S M, 1994, 'Jobs in British archaeology 1993/94', *TFA* 22, 7-8
IDS 1996, IDS Pay Directory, November 1996 (Incomes Data Service, London)
NES 1996, New Earnings Survey, 1996 Part A (HMSO, London)
 Schaaf, L, 1996, 'Report and recommendations of the Archaeological employment in Britain working party', *TFA* 26, 12-17
 Turner, R, 1996, 'Jobs in British archaeology 1995', *TFA* 25, 8-9

KEY TO TABLES

EXC = Excavator; SA = Site Assistant;
 AS = Assistant Supervisor; SUP = Supervisor;
 FO = Field Officer; PM = Project Manager
 JCRM = Junior SMR/CRM; SCRUM = Senior SMR/CRM; UM = Unit Manager
 FEC = Finds, Environmental or Conservation;
 IDS = Illustration, Design or Survey

Table 1a Jobs in British archaeology, 1996 summary

(standard data: compatible with 1993-1995)
 Standard data: total jobs = 154; mean pay = £12620

CATEGORY	EXC	SA	AS	SUP	FO	PM	JCRM	SCRUM	UM	FEC	IDS
No. of jobs	9	45	1	5	7	8	29	23	3	15	9
Mean starting pay	9281	10012	6550	12011	13644	16942	11681	16461	22622	13964	13017
Min. starting pay	8118	8679	6550	11538	10509	14740	6400	11538	20229	11874	9213
Max. starting pay	10194	10194	6550	12500	15600	18000	15500	21000	25000	17300	16128
Private bodies	11%	4%	100%	20%	43%	38%	24%	9%	33%	20%	44%
Temporary contracts	100%	100%	100%	100%	43%	38%	45%	22%	33%	87%	56%
Mean contract length (months)	0.5	1.1	1.5	1.8	21.0	24.0	11.9	21.6	24.0	6.1	16.2
Mention IFA	0%	0%	0%	0%	14%	63%	7%	26%	0%	0%	0%
Mention accom.	44%	31%	0%	40%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 1b Jobs in British archaeology, 1996 summary

(enhanced data: not compatible with 1993-1995)
 Enhanced data: total jobs = 282; mean pay = £11653

CATEGORY	EXC	SA	AS	SUP	FO	PM	JCRM	SCRUM	UM	FEC	IDS
No. of jobs	100	51	11	10	12	9	31	24	3	18	13
Mean starting pay	10024	9939	10490	11645	12813	16760	11744	16609	22622	13803	12412
Min. starting pay	8118	8679	6550	10844	10509	14740	6400	11538	20229	11000	9213
Max. starting pay	11958	10194	10844	12500	15600	18000	15500	21000	25000	17300	16128
Private bodies	13%	16%	9%	40%	67%	44%	23%	13%	33%	33%	46%
Temporary contracts	97%	100%	100%	70%	50%	33%	48%	21%	33%	72%	46%
Mean contract length (months)	2.1	2.1	1.9	1.8	20.0	24.0	11.9	21.6	24.0	6.1	15.5
Mention IFA	0%	0%	0%	0%	8%	56%	10%	25%	0%	0%	0%
Mention accom.	4%	27%	0%	20%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 2 Jobs in British archaeology: comparison of pay & job numbers, 1995-1996

(based on standard data)

		Mean pay			No. of jobs		
		1995	1996	Change	1995	1996	Change
FIELD POSTS	Excavator	8597	9281	+8%	22	9	-59%
	Site Assistant	9524	10012	+5%	9	45	+400%
	Assistant Supervisor	10902	6550	-40%	3	1	-67%
	Supervisor	11911	12011	+1%	22	5	-77%
	Field Officer	13616	13644	0%	16	7	-56%
CRM POSTS	Project Manager	18094	16942	-6%	8	8	0%
	Junior CRM/SMR	11656	11681	0%	31	29	-6%
	Senior CRM/SMR	15030	16461	+10%	8	23	+188%
SUPPORT POSTS	CRM/Unit Manager	24863	22622	-9%	3	3	0%
	Finds / Enviro / Conserv	12647	13964	+10%	18	15	-17%
	Illustr / Design / Survey	11820	13017	+10%	10	9	-10%
Overall		12228	12620	+3%	150	154	+3%