

Jobs in British archaeology 1997

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The IFA Jobs Information Service has now been used to monitor five consecutive years of advertised jobs in British archaeology¹, allowing both year-on-year comparisons and longer term observations to be made. For the second year running, the data were collected in two ways: 'standard data', compatible with that from 1993 onwards; and 'enhanced data', where adverts with insufficient information were followed up wherever possible, giving a more complete picture of the jobs advertised. Table 1a shows the standard data set, allowing direct comparison with the tables published for 1993-1996, while Table 1b shows the enhanced data which can be compared with similar information published in the report for 1996. Enhancement of the data tends to be focused on junior field jobs advertised by private organisations, a phenomenon for the most part attributable to the high cost of advertising in relation to short field projects.

Table 2 shows the comparison of pay and job numbers between 1996 and 1997, based on the enhanced data². Table 3 shows comparable data between 1993 and 1997, revealing some interesting but disheartening trends.

Comparisons 1996 and 1997

Unless otherwise stated, the following comparisons are based on the enhanced data shown on Tables 1b and 2.

Job numbers

A slight though welcome rise in the number of advertised jobs can be attributed to increases in senior field positions and in support posts, with significant falls in junior and senior SMR jobs. This is the opposite of the trends observed in 1996, perhaps suggesting a longer term stabilisation (or stagnation) in the market.

In 1997 there was a significant increase in the number of senior field jobs advertised, especially at field officer and project manager level. This could be a

reflection of the greater amount of office-based work now required for field projects, much of which has arisen as a result of improving standards in project management. The number of advertised specialist posts also showed a healthy increase, perhaps again showing that the post-excavation and report production aspects of field archaeology may be receiving more attention.

Pay

Overall, advertised starting salaries increased by around 4%, marginally ahead of inflation³, and broadly in line with average earnings⁴. Apart from an anomaly with assistant supervisor posts, the result of the small sample size for that category, there was very little significant movement either way in terms of average pay. The standard data set does, however, show a slight overall decline in starting salaries, most pronounced for the specialist posts.

Once again, excavators failed to reach the IFA recommended minimum of local authority APT&C Scale 2, which in April 1997 stood at £10,449⁵. Only 39 of the 73 jobs in the survey achieved this level, falling, surprisingly, to 33 out of 74 site assistant posts. On average, project manager and senior CRM posts continued to exceed the £15,759 Scale 6 starting salary.

Apart from a trainee archaeological assistant post, the lowest advertised starting salary was for project assistants with the Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust at £8,019. Highest paid was senior archaeologist at English Heritage Central Archaeology Service at £26,000. At the other end of the scale, the Central Archaeology Service rates for site assistants also seem to have been adjusted in the right direction — from £8679 at the start of 1996, to £10,248 by the end of 1997.

Private bodies

In contrast with the past two years, there was a notable rise, from 30% to 40%, in posts advertised by private bodies⁶.

Although the data may not stand up to close scrutiny, the pattern seems to be for non-publicly controlled organisations advertising more field and senior CRM posts, and fewer specialist jobs. A comparison with the 1995 data, however, suggests that this may not be a sustained pattern.

Contracts

As usual, almost all field posts of supervisor level and below were temporary contracts. A greater proportion of senior CRM posts were temporary in 1997, but the increase is attributable to non-SMR related work. Around two-thirds of specialist posts were advertised as temporary contracts. Mean advertised contract lengths showed small fluctuations, with a decline for senior field staff and an improvement for junior CRM posts.

IFA membership

The enhanced data show a welcome increase in references to the IFA, from 15 in 1996 (5%) to 25 in 1997 (8%). The increase was most notable in advertisements for supervisors and field officers, but there was a decline to 32% for project managers — posts which one would have expected to have a commercial edge if occupied by IFA members.

Accommodation

The significant rise in offers of free accommodation is almost entirely attributable to adverts from two sources, one of which was private (see note on taxable employment benefits, page 3 this issue).

Longer-term trends

Although there have been gradual improvements in the depth and breadth of information derived from the IFA Jobs Information Service, it is still possible to compare some of the collected data over the last five years (Table 3)⁷. In comparing today's situation with that in 1993, it is clear that the level of pay has tended not to keep up with the national

Table 1a Jobs in British archaeology, 1997 summary (standard data: compatible with 1993-1996 standard data)

CATEGORY	EXC	SA	AS	SUP	FO	PM	JCRM	SCRM	UM	FEC	IDS	ALL
No. of jobs	20	39	4	12	14	11	23	17	0	23	13	176
Mean starting pay	8946	10047	13487	11052	13715	16799	12619	16646	-	13076	12423	12327
Min. starting pay	7572	8019	10884	8864	11748	13572	9570	12171	-	9691	10000	7572
Max. starting pay	11745	13050	14355	15660	15306	26000	15323	21000	-	15830	15159	26000
Private bodies	0%	0%	75%	33%	21%	36%	9%	35%	-	9%	8%	14%
Temporary contracts	100%	100%	100%	100%	86%	45%	52%	35%	-	65%	77%	77%
Mean contract length (months)	1.6	1.4	1.8	2.3	8.1	12.4	19.7	21.8	-	16.5	9.7	-
Mention IFA	0%	0%	0%	17%	21%	18%	9%	18%	-	9%	0%	7%
Mention accom.	65%	28%	75%	33%	21%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

Table 1b Jobs in British archaeology, 1997 summary (enhanced data: compatible with 1996 enhanced)

CATEGORY	EXC	SA	AS	SUP	FO	PM	JCRM	SCRM	UM	FEC	IDS	ALL
No. of jobs	73	74	8	19	27	19	23	18	0	23	15	299
Mean starting pay	9880	10875	13487	12029	13484	16606	12619	16638	-	13076	12367	12100
Min. starting pay	7572	8019	10884	8864	11748	13572	9570	12171	-	9691	10000	7572
Max. starting pay	11745	13050	14355	15660	15306	26000	15323	21000	-	15830	15159	26000
Private bodies	41%	43%	75%	58%	59%	53%	9%	39%	-	9%	20%	40%
Temporary contracts	100%	100%	100%	95%	52%	42%	52%	39%	-	65%	67%	80%
Mean contract length (months)	2.9	2.1	1.9	4.1	8.1	17.3	19.7	20.4	-	16.5	9.7	-
Mention IFA	0%	0%	0%	11%	33%	32%	9%	22%	-	9%	0%	8%
Mention accom.	36%	31%	38%	37%	11%	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

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

Table 2 Jobs in British archaeology: comparison of pay & job numbers, 1996-1997 (based on enhanced data)

		Mean pay			No. of jobs		
		1996	1997	Change	1996	1997	Change
FIELD POSTS	Excavator	10024	9880	-1%	100	73	-27%
	Site Assistant	9939	10875	+9%	51	74	+45%
	Assistant Supervisor	10490	13487	+29%	11	8	-27%
	Supervisor	11645	12029	+3%	10	19	+90%
	Field Officer	12813	13484	+5%	12	27	+125%
	Project Manager	16760	16606	-1%	9	19	+111%
CRM POSTS	Junior CRM/SMR	11744	12619	+7%	31	23	-26%
	Senior CRM/SMR	16609	16638	0%	24	18	-25%
	CRM/Unit Manager	22622	0	-	3	0	-100%
SUPPORT POSTS	Finds / Enviro / Conserv	13803	13076	-5%	18	23	+28%
	Illustr / Design / Survey	12412	12367	0%	13	15	+15%
Overall		11653	12100	+4%	282	299	+6%
National average		18328	19167	+5%			

average, the exception being senior CRM staff doing best⁸. The most junior field staff, already poorly paid, are now lagging even further behind.

The overall modest rise in the number of advertised jobs from 1993 to 1997 is very disappointing. Based on standard data, there would appear to have been a decline in most levels of advertised field posts. For the lower grades, this might be explained by an increasing reliance on unsolicited CVs to fill junior field posts, but the apparent reduction in demand for project managers is more surprising, perhaps indicating internal promotions — the holy grail of a career structure!

Even though the 1997 numbers of both junior and senior CRM/SMR posts are reduced by a quarter compared with 1996, the table nevertheless shows a significant and sustained increase in these areas compared with 1993.

Conclusion

The data on which the above and previous discussions are based are recognised as being both partial and prone to skewing. However, it may still be possible to explore some basic questions, which can otherwise only be answered by anecdotal evidence or gut feeling.

The figures confirm that archaeologists are poorly paid at all levels, but also show in general that levels of pay do not seem to be improving. It will be interesting to see whether the advent of the Registration of Archaeological Organisations has any affect on this —

first impressions are that it has not.

Anyone looking for a job in British archaeology will already know that advertised jobs are few and far between, and will not be heartened to learn that this situation has remained more or less static over the past five years. At a time of economic upturn, coupled with the rise in the perceived importance of archaeology in the development process brought about by the PPGs, that the number of jobs has not increased is inexplicable. This can only be ascertained through other studies but, assuming that there are more jobs now than in 1993, then the data imply that posts are being filled without being advertised. Probably the more junior jobs and those on short-term contracts are secured by sending unsolicited CVs, but senior posts seem generally to be filled from within. If this model is correct, then perhaps there are better career prospects (for those with sufficient drive and initiative) than is apparent from the advertised positions. At the end of the day, however, there must also be an element of being in the right place at the right time.

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

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Endnote: English Heritage, through the IFA, has commissioned a survey of archaeological jobs and job profiles in the

UK, which promises to add a new dimension to our understanding of jobs in British archaeology. The results of this research will be published in *The Archaeologist*.

¹ Aitchison, K R and Anderson, S M, 1995 Jobs in British archaeology 1993/1994 *The Field Archaeologist* 22, 7–8; Turner, R, 1996 Jobs in British archaeology 1995 *The Field Archaeologist* 25, 8–9; Turner, R, 1997 Jobs in British archaeology 1996 *The Archaeologist* 29, 6–7

² The trends for these two data sets (standard and enhanced) were found to be broadly the same, and it was therefore felt unnecessary to reproduce the data shown in Table 2 for the standard data, which can be made available on request to the author.

³ Increase in RPI was 2.6% between April 1996 and April 1997. Source: *Monthly Digest of Statistics* No. 624, December 1997, 103.

⁴ Average for adults in all industries and services rose by 4.6% from £351.50 to £367.60 a week (£18,328 to £19,167). Source: *Monthly Digest of Statistics* No. 624, December 1997, 118.

⁵ Scale 2 (PIFA) – £10,449; Scale 4 (AIFA) – £12,171; Scale 6 (MIFA) – £15,759. Inner London weighting £2340; Outer London weighting £1245. Source: *IDS Pay Directory*, November 1997, 238–9.

⁶ An ambiguity in the status of an advertiser led to an error in relation to the 1996 figures for private bodies advertising for site assistants (enhanced data): the figure should be changed from 16% to 53%.
⁷ Data for specialist posts was not collected until 1994.

⁸ The 1997 assistant supervisor data are anomalous. The 1997 figures for supervisors (standard data) have been skewed by four low-paid posts which, if excluded, would give an average of £12,146 (ie an increase of 5% over 1993).

Table 3 Jobs in British archaeology: comparison of pay & job numbers, 1993/1997 (based on standard data)

		Mean pay			No. of jobs		
		1993	1997	Change	1993	1997	Change
FIELD POSTS	Excavator	8331	8946	+7%	24	20	-17%
	Site Assistant	8597	10047	+17%	33	39	+18%
	Assistant Supervisor	9799	13487	+38%	6	4	-33%
	Supervisor	11543	11052	-4%	14	12	-14%
	Field Officer	12528	13715	+9%	10	14	+40%
	Project Manager	14360	16799	+17%	17	11	-35%
CRM POSTS	Junior CRM/SMR	11084	12619	+14%	16	23	+44%
	Senior CRM/SMR	13707	16646	+21%	14	17	+21%
Overall		10766	12195	+13%	134	140	+4%
National average		16524	19167	+16%			