

Jobs in British archaeology 1998

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INTRODUCTION

The recent IFA Practitioner survey¹ showed that pay and conditions were uppermost in the respondents' minds. This is hardly surprising since, as will once again be demonstrated below, those at the lower end of the profession continue to be very poorly paid and have to take up employment on a very precarious basis.

This is the sixth year for which detailed information is available for advertised jobs in British archaeology and overall the trends are no more promising than in the past. Unless otherwise stated, the following analysis is compatible with 'enhanced' data from 1996 and 1997,² although 'standard' data continues to be collated. Table 1 shows the detailed statistics for each main group of jobs, while Table 2 compares the 1998 data on pay and jobs with that of the previous year.³ Figure 1 shows fluctuations in the proportion of jobs achieving IFA recommended minimum pay⁴ for three main groups of jobs over the past three years.

JOB NUMBERS

For the first time there has been a significant increase in the number of advertised jobs. While some of this rise can be attributed to a few adverts for large numbers of junior field staff, there was an underlying increase in job numbers of around 29% if junior field staff are excluded from the calculations. The apparent reduction in supervisor and project manager posts can be balanced against the 1996 figures.⁵

Only one assistant site supervisor post was advertised in 1998, which could be interpreted as reflecting a generally reduced size of major field exercises, resulting in a smaller hierarchy and an increased level of expertise of junior field staff. The threefold increase in field officer adverts compared with 1996⁶ must be heartening for those seeking a career in archaeology, especially since the mean contract length (where stated) has increased since last year. Junior CRM and specialist adverts have also increased steeply again, even more significantly when compared with 1996.

The number of adverts for buildings-related archaeologists seems to be on the increase, presumably in the wake of PPG 15, although one suspects that there is still a shortage of experienced practitioners in this specialist field. Buildings archaeology will hopefully also receive a boost in Scotland in due course, following the publication of the draft NPPG on planning and the historic environment. The number of adverts for museum-based professional archaeologists also

seems to be rising, despite hard times in many museum services. The six jobs at county archaeologist level are a positive contrast to the absence of such jobs in the previous year.

PAY

General levels of pay remain abysmally low compared to the national average, but those jobs which fared badly in 1997 seem to have bounced back in the following year. Overall, however, the average advertised starting salary failed again to keep up with inflation, or with the 4.0% rise in the retail price index.⁷

Other than trainee posts, the lowest advertised salary was for excavators for Southampton City Council, on the equivalent of £8801, based on a 37-hour week. However, later in the year similar posts were advertised by the same employer on £10,449, the IFA recommended minimum at the time. The highest paid post which might suitably be occupied by a professional archaeologist was head of finds and environmental services at the Museum of London, starting on £32,226. Just nine advertised jobs in 1998 had a potential starting salary above the national average.

As in 1996, pay for site assistants was less than for apparently less qualified excavators, another problem in terminology. This sort of anomaly could hopefully become a thing of the past if the detailed survey of job profiles proposed by the IFA takes place – isn't it time we all spoke the same language?

Figure 1 compares the success rate of jobs which have achieved the IFA recommended minimum in 1996–1998.⁸ While this relies on the correct job descriptions being used, the trend eventually should be that all jobs should be paid at least the minimum, especially if job profiling increases the consistency of job descriptions. The situation for AIFA and MIFA level jobs seems broadly to be stable, but the 1998 figures for PIFA jobs took a significant turn for the worse, dragging down the overall score for the year.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

Private bodies

The 1997 rise in posts advertised by private bodies has not been sustained, and the picture for 1998 is closer to that of 1996, although the proportion of private bodies requiring junior field staff has continued to be greater than two years ago.

Contract length

As usual, almost all contracts up to field officer level were temporary, but the mean contract length for junior field staff was even shorter than in 1997. Shorter contracts were common across most other posts, although there was in general a slight reduction in the proportion of temporary posts.

IFA membership

IFA membership was mentioned for 20 jobs in 1998, compared to 25 in 1997 and 15 in 1996. The long-awaited rise in the value of IFA membership in securing jobs will clearly have to wait a little longer, and the figures are frankly disappointing.

Accommodation

Free accommodation was offered by five employers, but overall was available to much fewer field staff than in 1997. The reduction in references to 'free' accommodation in job advertisements may be the result of moves to ensure that such accommodation is not seen as a taxable benefit of employment contracts.⁹

ROOM FOR OPTIMISM?

The rise in the number of advertised jobs has been a long time coming and given the tendency for fluctuations in the figures over the years, this may well be reversed in 1999. Overall, there are few signs that pay and conditions are improving: they are either relatively static, or are becoming slightly worse. It must be recognised, however, that advertised jobs are in many ways not likely to be representative of the profession as a whole, which is why the report on *Profiling the profession* promises to build on the data collected over the past 6 years through the IFA Jobs Information Service.

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I am grateful to Peter Hinton and Kenneth Aitchison for commenting on a draft of this paper. As in the past, copies of the secondary data on which this paper is based can be obtained from the IFA Secretariat, on submission of an A4 SAE.

Peter Hinton writes

Council discussed a draft of the report at the December meeting. It was agreed that there were very serious issues concerning employment in the profession. Council decided that immediate action must be taken concerning the IFA's recommendations on minimum salaries, to take account of pay awards. The IFA now recommends that the minimum salary for those exercising PIFA-level responsibilities is £10,761, for those exercising AIFA-level responsibilities £12,537, and £16,233 for archaeologists with MIFA-level responsibilities. Council noted that there is an urgent need to

establish profiles of the many different roles in archaeology, and to use these as a basis for salary recommendations in future. Discussions about a survey to gather relevant information are well advanced with the Archaeological Training forum.

¹ Moloney, R, 1998 Practitioner survey 1997, *The Archaeologist*, 32, 15-16

² See Turner, R, 1997 Jobs in British archaeology 1996, *The Archaeologist*, 29, 6-7; Turner, R, 1998 Jobs in British archaeology 1997, *The Archaeologist*, 31, 12-14

³ Average pay for adults in all industries and services rose 4.1% from £367.60 to £384.50 a week, ie £19,167 to £20,048pa. Source: *Monthly digest of statistics*, 636, December 1998, 128

⁴ From April 1998, the following minimum rates applied:

Scale 2 (PIFA) - £10,761;

Scale 4 (AIFA) - £12,537;

Scale 6 (MIFA) - £16,233.

Inner London weighting £2409;

Outer London weighting £1281.

Source: *IDS pay directory*, November 1998, 301.

Note: the April 1998 rise was not acknowledged through the JIS until December 1998

⁵ Ten supervisors and nine project managers, as opposed to 16 and 11 respectively in 1998

⁶ Twelve field officers in 1996, and 40 in 1998

⁷ Source: *Monthly digest of statistics*, 636, December 1998, 117

⁸ Taking into account the local government salary changes in each new financial year (see note 4).

PIFA posts = excavator and site assistant; AIFA posts = assistant supervisor, supervisor, junior CRM, and specialist posts; MIFA posts = field officer, project manager, senior CRM, and unit manager

⁹ Chadwick, P, *The Archaeologist*, 31, 3

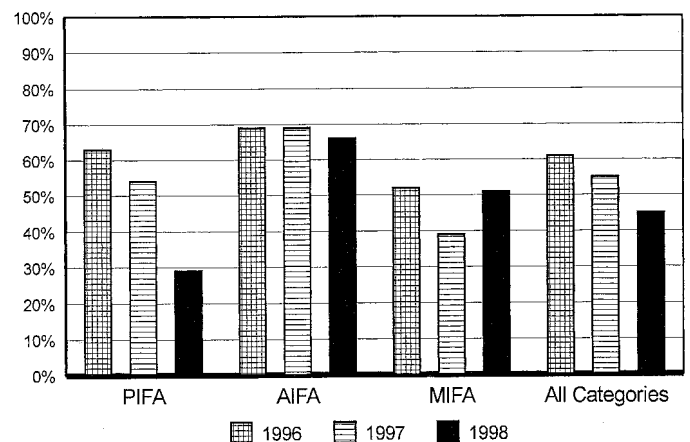


Fig 1

Table 1 Jobs in British archaeology, 1998 summary (enhanced data: compatible with 1996 enhanced data)

CATEGORY	EXC	SA	AS	SUP	FO	PM	JCR	SCR	UM	FEC	IDS	ALL
No. of jobs	91	101	1	16	40	11	40	19	8	40	21	388
Mean starting pay	10314	10176	11680	12732	14274	18268	12629	17680	23088	13442	13329	12364
Min. starting pay	8801	9646	11680	11157	12171	14000	10000	14337	19752	10018	9691	8801
Max. starting pay	11732	13438	11680	15643	19194	24000	14781	20706	32226	18000	17481	32226
Achieve IFA min. pay	48%	11%	0%	59%	15%	91%	57%	84%	100	80%	62%	45%
Private bodies	33%	40%	100%	31%	48%	45%	23%	21%	13	5%	43%	32%
Temporary contracts	100%	98%	100%	94%	55%	36%	63%	11%	0	63%	57%	76%
Mean contract length (months)	2.0	1.9	1.0	2.5	10.2	11.3	16.3	11.5	0.0	13.1	13.2	-
Mention IFA	0%	0%	0%	0%	13%	27%	10%	32%	13	3%	0%	5%
Mention accom.	11%	22%	100%	6%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	0%	-

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, 1997-1998 (based on enhanced data)

		Mean pay			No. of jobs		
		1997	1998	Change	1997	1998	Change
FIELD POSTS	Excavator	9880	10314	+4.4%	73	91	+25%
	Site Assistant	1875	10176	-6.4%	74	101	+36%
	Assistant Supervisor	13487	11680	-13.4%	8	1	-88%
	Supervisor	12129	12732	+5.8%	19	16	-16%
	Field Officer	13484	14274	+5.9%	27	40	+48%
	Project Manager	16606	18268	+10%	19	11	-42%
CRM POSTS	Junior CRM/SMR	12619	12629	+0.1%	23	40	+74%
	Senior CRM/SMR	16638	17680	+6.3%	18	19	+6%
	CRM/Unit Manager	0	23088	-	0	8	+++%
SPECIALIST POSTS	Finds / Enviro / Conserv	13076	13442	+2.8%	23	40	+74%
	Illustr / Design / Survey	12367	13229	+7.0%	15	21	+40%
Overall		12100	12364	+2.2%	299	388	+30%
National average		19167	20048	+4.6%			