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The student-run archaeology journal



**The Problem of Archaeology and Iconoclasm  
London in Medieval England  
Viking Children: A Case for Post-Processualism**

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## Editorial: Up the creek without a paddle

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What a month it has been for everyone living and working in York! It has certainly been a hair raising start of term, when many of us faced the possibility of returning home after the holidays to find a submerged house after the extremely high flooding over the Christmas period.

In keeping with this watery month, it seems fitting to include a snatch of the water crafts of the Bronze Age inhabitants around Europe. Not really a great deal has changed in the design of moderns canoes today in terms of shape. Many of these log boats were over 10m long, some even reaching 15 metres, designed to carry the weight of as much metalworking resources from place to place as possible. There are several distinct traditions of boat construction, as plank boats were later used in the Bronze Age too. Additionally, contemporaneously to this, sail boats had taken hold in Egypt and Greece. It could be likely that the production of the humble log boat carried more than just the utilitarian functions, and could be highly symbolic, as we can surmise from log boat burials, such as that of the Gristhorpe Man. Who knows, if York gets flooded to the extent that it was several weeks ago again, we may all have to start getting out our wood working tools and start paddling our way to university far more than we'd bargained for.

This month's issue contains a wide selection of articles, all of which were, as usual, a pleasure to read. Our first is an enjoyable read by a University of York student, Rachel Morgan, who takes us into Viking culture with a fresh perspective. She chooses to investigate children, and their representation in the investigations into these people. By taking a post-processualist viewpoint, she looks at Viking toys, their osteology and representation in Viking mythology.

Matt Earwaker from Birkbeck institute in London provides us with a passionately written piece explaining the depth of the destruction caused by ISIS in their campaign to destroy the heritage shown and preserved in various archaeological sites and monuments. Earwaker suggests how we may be able to better protect such sites from future damage.

Next, we have Adam Goodfellow's well informed article which explains the scene of employability in the field of Archaeology. This article contains several interesting charts of responses from survey work done in this area, as well as explaining the factors concerning the job opportunities and the opinions of those asked. Goodfellow finishes by offering advice to graduates and other people linked, or wanting, to join the archaeological profession.

University of York student, Izzy Bartley's paper is an insightful piece explaining the value of historic house museums above and beyond the materiality of their architecture and furnishings. Bartley explores the importance of investigating and displaying the social factors which have led to their preservation as the home of prized and collected items. Bartley argues for an implicit obligation for museums and other heritage organisations to hold in explaining their preservation as a whole, in addition to the items held within them.

Last but not least, we have an in depth investigation into the crafts of medieval London by Nottingham student, Jennifer Hatton. Hatton looks at the role played by this city into industry, taking into account the urban planning, the natural resources available and the social influences.

Finally, after wishing everyone a safe February, I'd like to give thanks to Varun Shiv Kapur, for permitting us to use one of his fantastic photos of the Temple of Bel in Palmyra, Syria, which was sadly recently destroyed by ISIS.

Don't forget, if you would like to share any of your thoughts, research or experiences with the archaeology community, then please submit your work to us at [submissions@theposthole.org](mailto:submissions@theposthole.org) to appear in next month's article. For guidance on submission, please visit our website at [www.theposthole.org/authors](http://www.theposthole.org/authors) for more information about this.

All the best,

Freya Lawson-Jones

Editor-in-Chief

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# Children in Viking Studies: a case for post-processual theory

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## Introduction

Research agendas within Viking Studies traditionally focus on the men of early medieval Scandinavia (Jesch 1991, 1). In doing so, they inadequately address women and children. This paper addresses archaeological approaches to children in Viking Studies. Specifically, the types of evidence available to the study of early medieval children and childhood are considered, alongside the ways scholars have analysed and interpreted these sources. In addressing varying approaches to the archaeology of early medieval children, I will highlight the analytical styles used to examine the osteological and material remains. This will facilitate a consideration of the value of scientific methodologies and theoretical frameworks in understanding the role of artefacts within broader socio-cultural contexts. In this way, I will argue that the study of Viking-Age children, though historically stagnant, could be expanded through implementation of theoretical frameworks focused on the influence of both actors and their material culture.

## Children in the Viking-Age

Traditional conceptions of children of early medieval Scandinavia are vague and minimal. To an extent this may be attributed to the quantity and quality of the sources relevant to the study of Viking-Age youth. In the Norse written record, males dominate and children receive scant attention from authors (Gardela 2012, 236). In Icelandic sagas when children are mentioned, it is usually the quantity of sons which is deemed of significance (Magnusson and Pálsson 1969, 86), though there are some references to children playing games in these later sources (Hansen 2002, 6). However, these accounts are limited and both temporally and spatially detached from early-medieval Scandinavia; therefore, archaeologists look to other types of evidence for additional insight into these aspects of the Viking world.

As a discipline, archaeology has presented limited and homogeneously stark conceptions of childhood (Boswell 1984, 10; Kamp 2001, 24; Baxter 2005, 9). For their part, medieval archaeologists traditionally accepted the trope of the “invisible” child as well; however, artefacts related to medieval childhood have begun to garner more attention (Gerrard 2003, 223). Within the archaeological record of early medieval Scandinavia, children can be seen in

some artefact assemblages and burials (Hadley and Hemer 2014, 1). To understand the degree to which research of archaeological materials from these contexts has impacted studies of Viking-Age children, the methods of assessment must be considered.

### **Osteological evidence of Viking-Age children**

One key source of information on early medieval Scandinavian children comes from burials. In keeping with other sources, child burials are not abundant in the archaeological record. Despite the high child mortality rate of Viking-Age Scandinavia (Hedenstierna-Jonson 2015, 97), they represent only a small proportion of excavated burials (Price 2012, 259). Scholars point to alternative burial practices and infanticide as possible explanations for the underrepresentation of children in the archaeological record (Gardela 2012, 236), but nonetheless, those child burials that *have* been found from early medieval Scandinavian contexts have proved informative.

The value of these burials resides in the ways archaeologists analyse and interpret them. Osteological and biochemical analyses offer considerable insight into the activities of individuals. Analyses of skeletal and dental remains for 'Harris lines, dental hypoplasias, porotic hyperostosis, reduced cortical bone thickness and retarded size' all provide information about the conditions faced by children during their lives (Kamp 2001, 9). Moreover, in optimum conditions, stable isotope analyses of sulphur, nitrogen and carbon can reveal both dietary and geographical habits of individuals (Hedenstierna-Jonson 2015, 96). To assess the significance of these types of analysis, it is useful to look at an example.

The early medieval emporium at Birka, on the Swedish island of Björkö, was established in the mid eighth-century (Richards 2005, 41). The area contains approximately two thousand burial mounds in addition to an assortment of chamber and cremation burials (Ambrosiani 2012, 97). Of the analyses of Birka's burial remains conducted throughout the years (see Gräslund 1981; Linderholm et al. 2008), the analyses of Bj 463 (Figure 1) offers the most relevant evidence of the importance of osteological and biochemical analyses of children. Bj 463 consists of a rectangular coffin containing the body of a young girl, a small knife, needle case of bone, Borre-style brooch and forty-seven glass beads (Hedenstierna-Jonson 2015, 93-5). Through stable isotope analysis, archaeologists established that her diet was primarily meat-based (despite the island environment of her burial) and that she was most likely not originally from Birka (ibid 96). As her diet likely represents that of her community, investigation of Birka's migrant girl offers a new understanding of larger trends within the environment and society (Hedenstierna-Jonson 2015, 99). In turn, this information allows archaeologists to adapt models of Viking-Age life courses and consider the catalysts of larger events such as



migration. The contradictory insights gleaned from this study highlight the utility of diversifying archaeological investigations.



Figure 1: Osteological analysis of Bj 463 has provided insight into the role of children in Scandinavian migration (Wähländer, et al. 2012, 174).

### **Material culture of Viking-Age children**

Material culture is another resource for archaeologists studying Viking-Age children. As with every other demographic, younger generations have left tangible remnants of their existence throughout time (Baxter 2005, 10). In both osteologically male and female child burials in Scandinavia, archaeologists have found dress ornaments and beads, but only young male graves contained weights and only female's included sickles, keys, sewing kits and mirrors (Svanberg 2003, 21). Though these artefacts offer some insight into society's regard for children, reliance on this evidence is complicated by the ambiguity of their deposition and ownership (Pearson 2001, 7) in addition to mortuary traditions which idealised the dead (Artelius and Svanberg 2005, 11).

Other material culture has been recovered from excavations of settlements. In fact, children appeared in the archaeological consciousness to account for unexplainable miniature objects discovered in these settings (Baxter 2005, 8). However, often the study of objects ascribed to children has been limited to establishing ownership (Wilkie 2000, 100). Consequently analysis has been narrowly focused, as this approach emphasizes the manners in which small objects

conflict with the adult world, rather than the information they contain regarding children and childhood (Crawford 2009, 59). Despite this general trend, some archaeologists have begun to consider the material culture of youth in broader contexts.

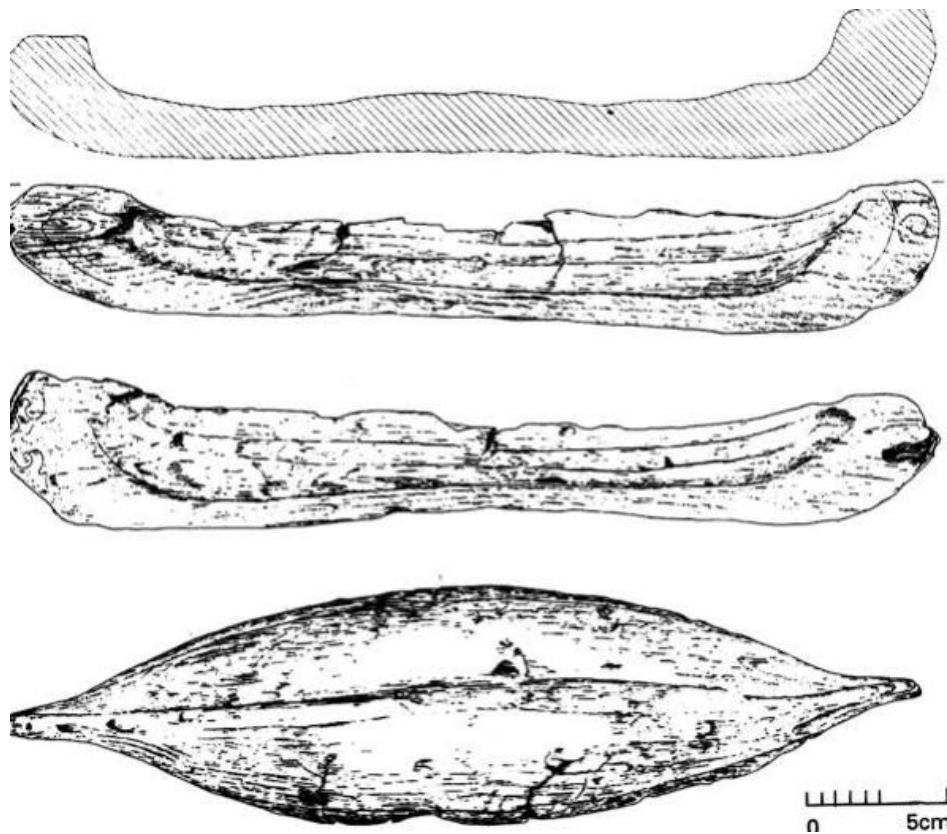


Figure 2: This sketch of a miniature ship from Viking-Age Dublin is typical of the types of artefacts associated with children (Gardela 2012, 238).

Within medieval archaeology, artefacts interpreted as toys have started to attract more attention (Gerrard 2003, 223). In many instances, archaeological analysis and interpretation of medieval toys is an arduous task. As Crawford (2009, 57) points out, many excavation reports lack any mention of toy finds. Nonetheless, within Viking Studies some objects have been interpreted as toys. For example, Gardela (2012, 239) analyses miniature wooden horses and boats (Figure 2) from Dublin and Trondheim in her more general assessment of early-medieval Scandinavians. Analysis of toys, such as this, is unique to Viking Studies; thus, it is significant in demonstrating the relevance of children's material culture in discussions of socio-cultural phenomena. However, this analysis follows more general trends which restrictively categorise small objects as children's artefacts, without exploring other explanations. It also focuses singularly on *what* children played with rather than *why* they played with these objects. And in doing so, this analysis fails to go beyond and consider broader implications of the objects associated with this demographic. For instance, Wilkie

(2000, 101) argues that objects are given to children purposefully to 'suggest and enforce certain norms of behavior for children based upon their gender, age, socio-economic class and even socio-cultural ideals of beauty'. Accordingly, McAlister (2013, np) argues that Viking-Age miniature horses, boats and swords can be interpreted as evidence of male enculturation based upon accounts in Icelandic sagas. Further analysis of these artefacts holds great potential for improving the understanding of topics concerning the social and domestic activities of the Viking world.

### **Discussion: alternative approaches**

As the toys from Dublin and Trondheim and the osteological remains of the Birka girl demonstrate, renewed interests in these traditionally marginalised groups afford an interesting insight into the Viking world. The recognition of the archaeology of Viking-Age children in these studies is a significant step in our understanding of their culture and place in society during this period. Still, it is clear that the inclusion of children in medieval archaeological discourses is sporadic and that the subject is still in its infancy. Like much of archaeology, this initial phase has not been quick to implement post-processual theory in its research.

This lies in direct contrast with current developments within early medieval archaeology. Although as a whole, medieval archaeology has been criticized for its limited theoretical engagement (Hodges 1982, 8; Austin 1990, 11; Gerrard 2003, 218), it has been noted that scholars of the early medieval period increasingly employ frameworks which seek to understand the agency of both humans and material culture (Gilchrist 2012, 216). Within Viking Studies, more specifically, there has been an increase in research which analyses artefacts with a view to their potential meaningfulness as well as their place within broader socio-political contexts.

In recent research, combs (Ashby 2009), silver (Sindbæk 2011) and silk (Vedeler 2014) have been analysed in order to discern their chronologies and roles in the broader setting of the Viking diaspora. These studies convincingly present the ability of material culture to contribute to discussions of broader socio-cultural phenomena. In these studies, scholars approached material culture through revisions of long-accepted typologies (Ashby 2009), considerations of interdisciplinary evidence (Sindbæk 2011) and adoption of theoretical frameworks from social anthropology (Vedeler 2014, 1-2). In doing so, they contributed to on-going discussions regarding early North Sea contact (Ashby 2009), motivations for Scandinavian expansion in the early ninth-century (Sindbæk 2011, 52) and the nature and extent of craft production and trade routes (Vedeler 2014, 1-2). Thus, these studies convincingly present the significance of material culture in the social and political machinations of Viking-Age Scandinavia and the

importance of interdisciplinary approaches and materiality in teasing out glimpses of the role of these objects in the past.

Accordingly, it seems that use of these theories could add much to the study of children as actors, and to childhood as a socially constructed phase of life. They offer an intellectual context through which it is possible to trace the diverse environments and actors encountered by the archaeology of children, as well as their wider cultural significance. By analysing and interpreting the material culture of children in a manner which considers the way the variable meaningfulness of the production, consumption and deposition of these items evolved, it may be possible to arrive at new understandings of the roles of this demographic within early medieval Scandinavian society. The studies alluded to above demonstrate the ways more comprehensive understandings of artefacts and their likely owners aid in understanding macro-level phenomena. Consequently, the archaeology of Viking-Age children seems likely to benefit Viking Studies more generally through an implicitly theoretical assessment.

### **Conclusion**

This brief consideration of the archaeology of Viking-Age children has attempted to highlight the current state of this area of study. The infamous raiders and traders of early medieval Scandinavia once were children too. As with most humans, this phase likely impacted their development and world view. As scholars continue to grapple with the catalysts of the Viking diaspora, they should not neglect the archaeology of childhood. The contributions made by recent research to the understanding of the social significance of material culture in Viking Studies suggests that post-processual theoretical frameworks emphasising agency offer a viable means of integrating children into discussions of broader phenomena within the period. The precise impact of Viking-Age children and childhood on the macro-scale is as yet unclear, but until they are included in these areas of research, understandings of this period will remain partial at best.

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## The destruction of archaeological sites



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The destruction of archaeological sites is not a modern phenomenon. Indeed, in Ancient times Julius Caesar is recorded as having burnt over “400,000”<sup>1</sup> of the scrolls present in the Library of Alexandria, during the Roman Civil war of 49 BCE when Caesar was hunting down Pompey the Great. As he was outnumbered in enemy territory, he ordered the “ships in the harbour to be set on fire”<sup>2</sup>, and the fire spread to the library. This, however, is only one of the several theories regarding the disappearance of the Alexandrian library. Another theory states that the downfall of the library is linked to an “economic decline”<sup>3</sup> in Ptolemaic Egypt.

There are more recent attempts to create gaps in our record of the past. The Nazis tried to erase written evidence with their infamous book burnings, resulting in the destruction of about “10,000”<sup>4</sup> non-German books and the persecution of their authors<sup>5</sup>. However, the real inspiration for this article, was the destruction of Nimrud by ISIS. It was upsetting to watch a site destroyed within a couple of minutes, but I believe we can learn from the ruination of Nimrud. Later in this article I hope to suggest how we can protect archaeological sites from the same fate.

As it is, the artefacts being stored in various museums have prevented the complete loss of Nimrud. We can still learn about the site from its surviving artefacts.

In order to understand the loss of Nimrud, we must first understand the history behind the site.

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<sup>1</sup>(no date) Available at: <http://www.bede.org.uk/library.htm> (Accessed: 27th July 2016).

<sup>2</sup> *The burning of the library of Alexandria* (no date) Available at: <http://ehistory.osu.edu/articles/burning-library-alexandria> (Accessed: 27 July 2015).

<sup>3</sup> *The destruction of the great library of Alexandria* (2014) Available at: <http://www.ancient-origins.net/ancient-places-africa-history-important-events/destruction-great-library-alexandria-001644> (Accessed: 27 July 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Welle, D. (2001) *Library of burned books to recall Nazi Barbarism* | culture | DW.COM | 15.05.2006. Available at: <http://www.dw.com/en/library-of-burned-books-to-recall-nazi-barbarism/a-2018048> (Accessed: 27 July 2016).

<sup>5</sup>Ibid

Once “the capital of the great Assyrian state that collapsed in the late seventh century”<sup>6</sup>, it was “first excavated in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century”<sup>7</sup>, and then again in the 20<sup>th</sup> century<sup>8</sup>. Therefore, even though ISIS have destroyed the site of Nimrud, we can learn from this and prevent further tragedies.

Nimrud was destroyed with “sledgehammers, a bulldozer, and explosives”<sup>9</sup>. Whilst Nimrud is the main focus of this article, there have been other, less well-known sites which have been targeted by ISIS. One of these is the world heritage site of Hatra<sup>10</sup>, a military fortress that was founded in the first century BCE by the Arsacid dynasty<sup>11</sup>. It was significant as an “important trade and religious centre and was the site of the main Shamash temple”<sup>12</sup>. It was destroyed in the mid-third century by the Sasanians during their war with the Romans, though the ruins of the town had survived and were deemed a world-heritage by UNESCO<sup>13</sup>. There are many sites like these that are largely unheard of, and whose history should be more widely taught before they share the same fate as Hatra and Nimrud at the hands of ISIS.

One simple but crucial move we need to make is to condemn the actions of ISIS. The head of UNESCO has said “I condemn with the strongest force the destruction of the site at Nimrud”<sup>14</sup>. Furthermore, Irina Bokvo goes on to say that she “calls on all political and religious leaders in the region to stand up and remind everyone that there is absolutely no political or religious justification for the destruction of humanity’s cultural heritage”<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>6</sup>*The rise and fall of Nimrud* (no date) Available at: <http://www.historytoday.com/mark-ronan/rise-and-fall-nimrud> (Accessed: 27 July 2015).

<sup>7</sup> Ibid

<sup>8</sup> Ibid

<sup>9</sup> photograph and Danti, M. (2015) *Why ISIS hates archaeology and blew up ancient Iraqi palace*. Available at: <http://news.nationalgeographic.com/2015/04/150414-why-islamic-state-destroyed-assyrian-palace-nimrud-iraq-video-isis-isil-archaeology> (Accessed: 16 January 2016).

<sup>10</sup> Malm, S. and Press, A. (2015) *Video: Islamic state group destroys ancient ruins of Nimrud*. Available at: <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3035534/Video-Islamic-State-group-destroys-ancient-ruins-Nimrud.html> Date accessed 08/01/2016 (Accessed: 16 January 2016).

<sup>11</sup> Salkin, R. M. and Schellinger, P. E. (1996) *International dictionary of historic places: Volume 1-5*. Edited by Trudy Ring and Noelle Watson. Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn Publishers.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup>(no date) Available at: <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/mar/06/isis-destroys-ancient-assyrian-site-of-nimrud> Date accessed 04/08/2015 (Accessed: 16 January 2016).

/Blakemore, E. and @heroinebook, F. (2015) *UN: Destroying the ancient city of Nimrud was a ‘War Crime’*. Available at: <http://www.smithsonianmag.com/smart-news/un-destroying-ancient-city-nimrud-was-war-crime-180954489/?no-ist> (Accessed: 16 January 2016).



While condemning the actions of ISIS is a step forward in the protection of archaeological sites, there are more actions we can take. One of these actions is to support the “#unite4heritage”<sup>16</sup> project, which aims to “share the values of tolerance, diversity and respect”<sup>17</sup>. I believe this will help show that we as people are united against the actions of ISIS, and will help to promote the protection of archaeological sites.

Archaeological legislation and guidelines are in place which help to protect sites. However, it didn't protect Nimrud. One possible solution could be to put in place guards to try and limit the damage ISIS can do to high priority sites. This would not be ideal, and probably extremely difficult, but it may be a necessity in order to stop ISIS doing the same to other sites.

However, many archaeological sites in Syria are already protected by guards. Working for the Directorate General of Antiquities and Museums (DGAM), a government agency, these guards have primarily worked to combat looting. In some recent cases, the DGAM guards themselves were held at gun point by some looters<sup>18</sup>. There is a “15-year jail sentence”<sup>19</sup> but this doesn't appear to stop any looting. However, the Directorate general of antiquities and museums (DGAM) seized 1300 looted items in April 2012<sup>20</sup>, demonstrating that there is some progress in stopping the looters and preventing the destruction of archaeological sites. This brings up the question of why people continue to plunder archaeological sites in spite of the 15-year jail sentence<sup>21</sup>, a possible explanation for which could be the culture of collecting. There many people who think that “collecting archaeological art is regarded as signifying an educated taste”<sup>22</sup>, and whilst this attitude seems harmless, it is supporting the destruction of archaeological sites as they are often destroyed in the process of looting. For example, the 6,000 classic Maya polychrome vessels that were removed from Guatemala and Mexico<sup>23</sup>, means that “thousands of burials have been destroyed in the process of obtaining these saleable objects”<sup>24</sup>. Looting is one of the most serious threats that archaeological sites face, and perhaps one of the ways of combatting this is to reduce the popularity of this culture.

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<sup>16</sup>*Unite4* (no date) Available at: <http://www.unite4heritage.org/> (Accessed: 16 January 2016).

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid*

<sup>18</sup>*Antiquity journal* (no date) Available at: <http://www.antiquity.ac.uk/projgall/cunliffe333/> (Accessed: 16 January 2016).

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>22</sup> (2006) Available at: <http://www.penn.museum/documents/publications/expedition/pdfs/24-3/miller.pdf> (Accessed: 9 January 2016).

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*

UNESCO say that they will “constantly monitor the illicit traffic of stolen antiquities”<sup>25</sup>, which could be a step-forward, as illicit antiquity trade has been happening in various countries for centuries. There are examples of such illicit trading in the UK, such as the “Batheaston hoard or hoards.”<sup>26</sup> In this case there were about 301 bronze artefacts excavated from south Wiltshire without any permission, and these are likely to have been from a scheduled ancient monument<sup>27</sup>. This shows that there are problems in this country that are unheard of due to the particular focus of looting in foreign countries. It may help if UK looting was given more coverage by the media, to make the problem seem more relevant in everyday life.

Furthermore, in protecting archaeological sites, UNESCO has been teaching people about heritage. 1600 students have been invited to a guided tour of either the world heritage archaeological sites of Lebanon or in the national museum<sup>28</sup>. This is an important step forward, as whilst UNESCO’s highest priority is to protect sites, it is also important to teach people about their heritage and thus make them more inclined to aid in its protection.

However, while that remains a problem, UNESCO has started to deal further with preventing the destruction of archaeological sites. A task force<sup>29</sup> has been designed to deal with this. This taskforce will “update and monitor the state of conservation of damaged and endangered historic and archaeological sites and monuments”<sup>30</sup>. This demonstrates that there have been developments since the destruction of Nimrud, with more efforts being made to protect endangered sites. Furthermore, satellite archaeology can be seen to combat this problem, as archaeologist Dr.Sarah Parcak has been using it to monitor the destruction of ancient sites<sup>31</sup>. This suggests that if UNESCO utilised satellite archaeology, it could be used to prevent the destruction of sites. However, there are of course limitations to this- satellites “traditionally produce low resolution imagery”<sup>32</sup> creating a problem because “Low resolution imagery can only detect the larger archaeological structures”<sup>33</sup>. As a result, sites which do not fit the scale

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<sup>25</sup> (no date) Available at: [https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/urgent\\_response\\_final\\_eng.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/urgent_response_final_eng.pdf) (Accessed: 12 January 2016)

<sup>26</sup> Stead, I. M. (2000) *The Salisbury hoard*. United Kingdom: The History Press cited in Brodie, N. (2000) *Stealing history: The illicit trade in cultural material*. United Kingdom: McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

<sup>28</sup> <http://unite4heritage.org/news/1600-lebanese-students-to-learn-about-heritage-protection> Date accessed 06/01/2016

<sup>29</sup> (no date) Available at: [https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/urgent\\_response\\_final\\_eng.pdf](https://en.unesco.org/sites/default/files/urgent_response_final_eng.pdf) (Accessed: 12 January 2016)

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Johnson, S. (2015) *2016 TED Prize awarded to pioneering satellite archaeologist*. Available at: <http://uscar.usc.edu/?p=1431> (Accessed: 13 January 2016).

<sup>32</sup> Pavlidis, L. (2005) *High resolution satellite imagery for archaeological application*. Available at: <http://mariamagic.donatecharity.net/science-technology/Hig>

<sup>33</sup> Ibid

will not be detected. This therefore suggests that satellite imagery would be ideal for protecting the larger archaeological sites if utilised with the right amount of resources, although it could potentially leave the smaller sites unprotected.

To conclude, it can be seen that there is much we can learn from the destruction of the Nimrud. While it is a sad and ultimately unjust fate for the ancient archaeological site, it has been noted that artefacts have been preserved in certain museums, meaning that younger generations will be able to learn about the site. However, it must be remembered that the destruction of Nimrud is not an isolated incident. There are several less famous sites that have been destroyed due to either war or extremism. Archaeologists should bear in mind the other sites which have been destroyed, and should do what is possible to fill the gaps in the archaeological record. Therefore, while the destruction of archaeological sites is lamentable, these sites may have served to prompt UNESCO to take action. The organisation seems to be moving forward; their #unite4heritage campaign is helping to recreate memories of sites and spreading awareness of world-heritage sites in order to combat the threats of ISIS in a non-violent way. Furthermore, they sincerely wish to stop looting, protect sites, and reduce the destruction of archaeological sites. However, it must be remembered that so far, this sincerity is all they have. Progress will be seen in their actions.

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# Understanding employability in professional archaeology



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## Context

A number of metrics for the archaeological sector are recorded in 'Profiling the Profession', a series of reports produced at five-year intervals on behalf of the ClfA – most recently in 2012/13 by Landward Research Ltd (Aitchison & Rocks-Macqueen, 2013). These surveys identify the archaeological workforce, their roles, salaries, qualifications, the status of skills in the workforce, and the availability of training through employers. What these reports fail to capture is what commercial units and other employers expect when hiring for an 'entry-level' position - a job for which candidates with no previous paid employment in archaeology are considered.

This survey was conducted ahead of a workshop at Durham University in May 2015. It was designed to provide data, rather than anecdotal evidence, to help current undergraduates understand how to maximise their employability. When reading the results, the importance of changing economic and governmental circumstances on the employment market must be remembered.

## The survey instrument

The survey format facilitated comparison between responses from different parties, while also allowing for more extended, detailed answers. Primarily, it assessed the degree to which certain skills, qualifications, or experiences would influence the chance of the applicant being hired for an entry-level position. A Likert-scale was used, by which responses were translated into a score from 0 to 10, with higher ratings representing a more positive impact on the application. This was supplemented by open response questions providing an opportunity for explanation and further detail.

The areas investigated in the survey were academic experience, including specialist skills such as osteoarchaeology; fieldwork experience; professional experience, including work outside archaeology; application skills; qualifications and memberships; and other knowledge and skills related to the heritage sector. The survey's final questions established the



company's size, frequency of hiring over the last three years, willingness to hire recent graduates, and availability of training.

130 archaeological employers, drawn principally from the British Archaeological Jobs Resource, were contacted in March 2015. These were mainly commercial fieldwork units, as well as County Council teams, archaeological trusts, research companies, and prospection companies. Employers from museums and educational services were not contacted. The survey was offered initially over the telephone, and this proved to be the preferred method of response for those employers that took part. However, in several cases, units requested a written version of the survey, which was sent via email. This format was also sent to those employers who could not be reached by telephone; these responses from the written format were not distinct from those received by telephone.

Two companies declined to participate as a matter of company policy, while three were no longer trading. Ten companies had no entry-level archaeological employees, with no intention to hire any in the foreseeable future, and were excluded. In total, 40 employers returned surveys, of which 39 were in a suitable format for analysis, giving a rate of return of 30%. This exceeds the 10% sample size normally required to draw meaningful conclusions about a population, as well as the expected minimum of 30 cases.

The survey included several questions aimed at establishing the size of the current market for hiring entry-level staff, and the frequency at which these positions become available. This was also intended to permit investigation of whether hiring priorities are linked to either the size or hiring frequency of the company.

The average number of entry-level positions with each company at the time of the survey, including casual staff, was 11.14, although this varied widely between units. The largest proportion of units, 41%, had between 1 and 5 entry-level positions, while 18% had none at all (see figure 1). Recruitment for these positions averaged 10.06 staff per year between 2012 and 2015, including casuals. 36% of units hired less than once per year, with another 31% recruiting between 1 and 3 new staff annually (see figure 2).

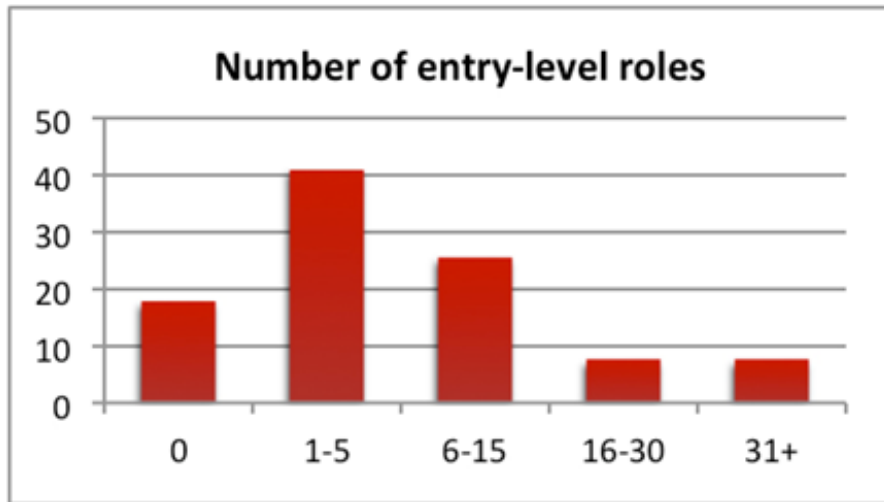


Figure 1. Employers categorised by their current number of entry-level roles

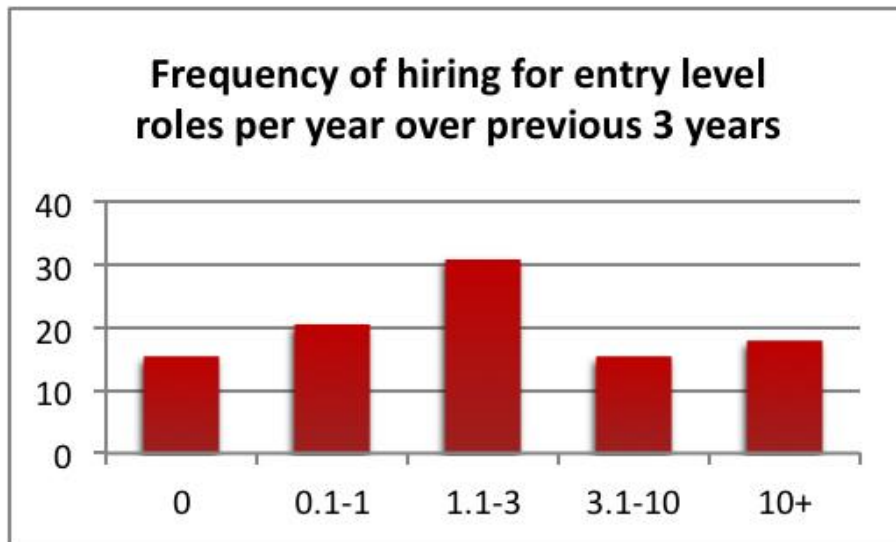


Figure 2. Employers categorised by their recent frequency of hiring for entry-level roles.

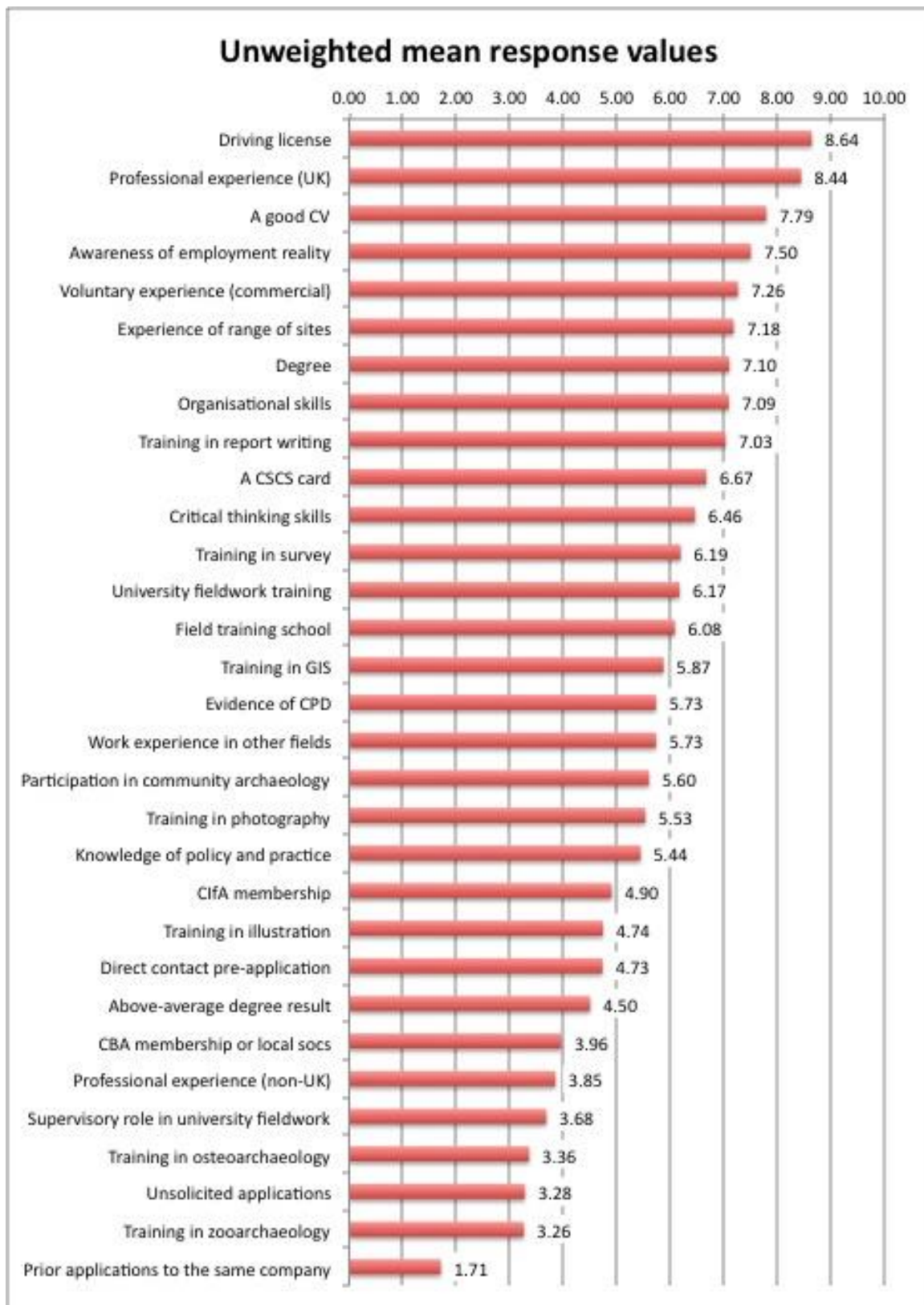


Figure 3. Qualities and skills ranked according to the mean response values given by employers (all responses weighted equally).

### **Results of the research: Likert-scale responses**

Overall, the respondents rated non-academic skills and experiences significantly higher than academic ones. Four of the six most highly valued qualities related to experience and understanding of professional archaeological employment in Britain, as shown in figure 3. Previous experience in professional archaeology was rated highly at 8.44, followed by an awareness of the reality of work in commercial archaeology. Voluntary experience with a commercial unit, and experience of a range of archaeological sites were also valued above 7.00. The remaining two top qualities were possession of a driving license – the most highly rated quality of all – and submitting a good resume, the third most influential factor.

Holding a degree in archaeology was considered important – scoring 7.10 overall, and ranked as the seventh most helpful quality for finding employment. However, having a grade above 2:1 was not seen as significant. Undergraduate training in specific skills was given lower ratings – with five scores below 6.00. This reflects the expectation that new applicants will require company-specific training regardless of the content of their undergraduate course. The exceptions to this were training in report writing (7.03), and survey and prospection techniques (6.19). Training in GIS applications and photography were rated as helpful skills which were not expected in candidates.

Fieldwork in non-commercial environments was generally rated poorly. While gaining a university degree in archaeology was considered important, experience of university fieldwork training was rated at 6.17. Some respondents commented on the variability of this training between institutions, although several suggested that this experience was considered more valuable if they were familiar with the staff or department involved. Holding a supervisory position during university field training would not greatly improve the strength of an application. University training did score more highly than other schemes, such as participation in a field training school, or community project. Perhaps surprisingly, experience of professional archaeology outside the UK scored only 3.85.

Factors associated with a candidate's application, other than the presentation and content of their CV, were not considered influential. Having made previous applications to the company was the lowest rated of all the factors, at 1.71. Making speculative applications for employment was considered somewhat advantageous, as was contacting an employer to discuss an advertised position or ask for further information.

Holding a CSCS (Construction Skills Health and Safety) card was rated as a valuable quality, if not an essential one, scoring 6.67. Membership of archaeological societies was rated somewhat lower, with the ClfA at 4.90, and the CBA or local societies at 3.96. Transferrable professional skills were received well, however, with both organisational skills and critical

thinking rated highly if demonstrated with evidence in a CV or covering letter. Having a record of continuing professional development or knowledge of policies and practices in heritage management were not expected but were considered beneficial. Finally, having employment experience in general, even if outside archaeology, was rated at 5.73.

### **Open responses**

25 of the employers felt able to quantify the length of non-commercial fieldwork experience they expected candidates to have gained before applying, with an average of 12-13 weeks of fieldwork experience. Six companies reported a variation of 'quality over quantity', and indicated an interest in where the experience was acquired, the reputability of the body organising the fieldwork, and the range of experiences gained. Several of these companies identified referees as a way of assessing this. Five companies considered non-commercial fieldwork to be largely irrelevant, beyond showing interest and physical capability, while two more simply stated 'as much as possible'.

Unsurprisingly, a number of units identified the value of experience in construction or engineering (6 citations), museum work or work with a historical theme (4 citations), and especially work related to geographical or geological survey (10 citations). Four units made references to the army, outdoor, or physical occupations. Other sectors referenced included education, outreach, communicative or creative industries, computer-based work, photography, environmental work, accounting, research, and data handling.

Another open-response question was included to expand on the question 'How important is a good CV'. 16 different features of a 'good CV' were listed between the 39 units, although a small number were cited frequently. 22 employers defined a good CV as, 'concise', or 'succinct', containing enough detail without becoming wordy, with 17 wanting a structured CV. 15 employers noted that CVs should be tailored to the job advertised, by focussing on relevant skills and referring directly to the specification. Other qualities expected were accuracy of spelling and grammar (11 citations), the highlighting of key skills (8 citations), honesty and accuracy (6 citations), and the inclusion of sufficient detail to give a meaningful understanding of the applicant's experience (6 citations).

Finally, suggestions were requested for other important factors that had not been listed in the survey. Several of the responses to this question related to CVs, and were merged into that data. The range of responses was again broad, with 18 different categories of answer, and none being given by more than four different employers. These were having good references, demonstrating a sense of humour, and living in the local area or specifically showing willingness to move for the position. Willingness to learn and physical fitness each received 3 mentions. Other qualities mentioned as those employers might look for in an application

included intelligence, a willingness to work away, sector-specific knowledge, and social media skills.

### **Training Schemes**

This section of the survey was included at the request of the ClfA, and asked respondents to state whether they offered training to staff in entry-level positions, and if so, whether that training was through a formal programme, informal but with identified targets, or informal without targets.

Only 5 of the 39 companies offered no training for entry-level staff. These five were smaller than average, and four were also less active, or not active at all, in the hiring market. Among the 34 employers offering training, the vast majority provided informal schemes, with only four stating that they also provided access to some formal graduate training alongside this. However, more respondents organised some or all of their informal training with identified targets or outcomes (20) than without (14).

There was some correlation between the size of the company and the formality of training provided, with smaller companies (0-5 entry level staff) generally offering informal training without targets, or no training at all. Larger employers (6+ entry level staff) all provided some form of training, with 75% providing formal training, or informal training with identified targets. Three of the four employers offering formal training fell into the 6-15 entry-level staff category.

### **Weighted results**

The survey showed significant variation between employers in the number of staff taken on per year in entry-level positions, with some taking on no new staff in the last three years, and one hiring approximately 150 times per year. Consequently, weighting each employer equally does not accurately represent the job market perceived by applicants. To counteract this, the data was weighted according to the hiring frequencies of each company, using the categories they self-selected.

The weighted results, shown in figure 4, were broadly similar to the unweighted results, with nine of the same qualities selected in the top ten. The tenth, evidence of organisational skills, was replaced by undergraduate training in GIS applications. However, there were some noticeable changes in both the absolute rating for each skill, and their relative rankings.

Professional experience continued to dominate the most highly rated qualities, with all three (professional experience, voluntary experience, and awareness of the realities of employment) even being rated slightly more highly. However, experience of a range of site types was considered less important. This, together with having a good CV, was overtaken by having a degree.

Undergraduate-level training in GIS applications, photography, and survey techniques were rated somewhat more highly in the weighted results. However, undergraduate training in illustration, zooarchaeology, and osteoarchaeology were given noticeably higher ratings, although they remained lower in the relative ranking of skills and qualifications. Having a good degree was rated more strongly, at 5.57.

Membership of the ClfA was seen a more positive light in this data, at 6.17, while contacting the advertising company to discuss the position also gained noticeably (5.72).

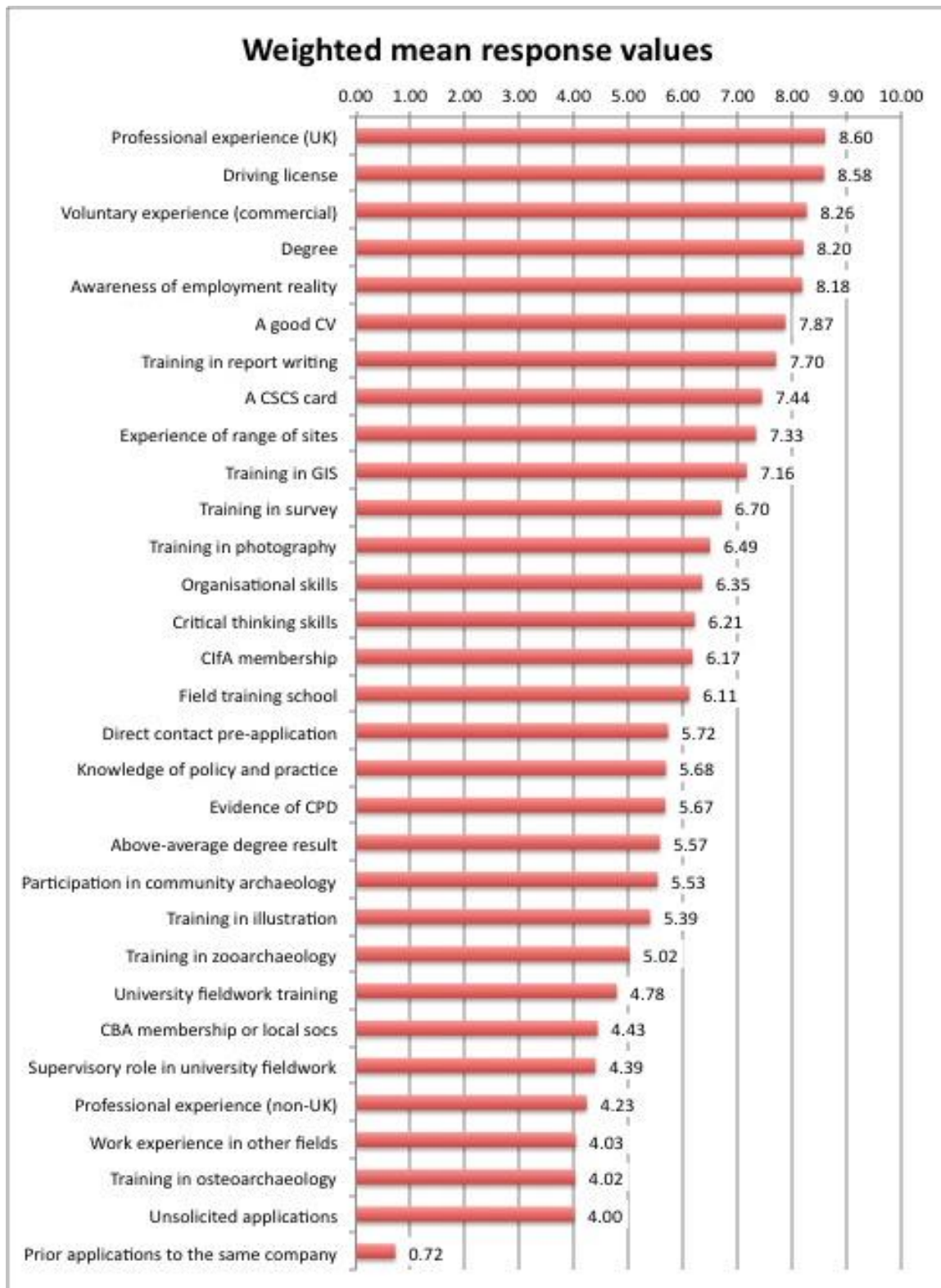


Figure 4. Qualities and skills ranked according to the mean response values given by employers (Responses weighted by hiring frequency).



Experience outside professional archaeology was markedly less valuable – university fieldwork training was ranked 11 places lower in the weighted data, with community projects regarded similarly. Work experience in other fields was also rated significantly lower, at 4.03.

### **Interpretation**

The weighted results reflect to a greater extent the priorities of employers that hire more frequently. These employers seem to place less significance on participation in university fieldwork, community archaeology projects, and work experience outside archaeology – although still acknowledging that they have a positive influence on a candidate's employability. At the same, modules offering training in specific skills at undergraduate level are received more positively, as are both holding a degree in archaeology, and gaining an above average degree result.

Taken together, this suggests that those employers who hire more frequently prefer skills and experiences that can be clearly identified from a CV, in particular, those which have a measurable outcome, and which are comparable with those of other candidates. This may be because the increased recruitment rate reduces the time these units can spend investigating and assessing the quality of fieldwork training. In contrast, academic results and the ability to pass a given training module represent a readily comparable measurement of candidates, while skills-based modules are easily identified from a CV or application form. This interpretation is supported by the comments from participants that university and community projects vary in the quality of experience and training provided. Unless they were personally familiar with the projects or the staff involved, these respondents assumed that the impact on the candidate was minimal.

In contrast, submission of a well-presented CV saw a relative drop in position. This may be due to the use of application forms in many companies, which require statements assessing skills in relation to the job specification, reducing the importance of the CV. Finally, the importance of references should not be underestimated in showing how effectively the candidate has learned from the experiences listed on a CV. Respondents indicated that they felt able to judge the value of references that came from an employer who was known to them.

### **Conclusions for current undergraduates**

The results emphasise the value of practical experience with professional companies. The majority of undergraduate archaeology courses require 2-6 weeks attendance at a training dig, but placements with commercial units are rare. Gaining this experience therefore requires effort on the student's part, but the survey suggests it significantly increases employability.

Academic success, beyond completing a degree, was not considered as helpful, and skills generally associated with specialist staff, such as osteoarchaeology, are not expected in entry-level positions. However, it should also be noted that taking these modules may be useful for access to postgraduate courses that lead to work in those specialist roles.

Having a driving license was considered important by most employers, and can be undertaken alongside degree studies. Similarly, most universities offer training in CV and application writing skills.

Finally, several employers mentioned that they pay special attention to applications from archaeologists they have personal experience of working with, including as temporary or voluntary staff. Attending voluntary projects gives students the chance to experience a range of different site types, meet potential future employers and demonstrate their fieldwork proficiency – as well as their general character, considering that 10% of the responding companies value a good sense of humour.

### **Conclusions for recent graduates**

Working voluntarily with commercial units is a good way to gain experience, and is rated by employers almost as highly as paid employment, although this may not be a financial possibility for recent graduates. Furthermore, the use of volunteers has wider implications for the number of paid positions available in the job market, as recognised by several respondents.

Working outside of archaeology increases employability, over those with no work experience at all, which is helpful for graduates who need to earn while looking for work. Several companies identified a need for applicants to show a continuing interest in the field, suggesting that at least some voluntary involvement in archaeology, such as in evening or weekend activities, is a good idea. Courses in specialist skills, although sometimes expensive, may also be worthwhile.

Lastly, one area where graduates can improve their employability is in their application skills – producing a good CV, and tailoring their application to the job specification. Respondents also recognised contacting the company to discuss the position as a positive trait, provided that the candidate had a meaningful question to ask.

## Useful resources

### **The British Archaeological Jobs Resource – [www.bajr.org](http://www.bajr.org)**

BAJR is an indispensable source for information on jobs and training courses, not only for those aiming to work in archaeology, but those already employed. Run by a professional archaeologist, BAJR also has an interest in workplace conditions and professional development. The group has an active Facebook presence.

### **The Council for British Archaeology – [www.archaeologyuk.org](http://www.archaeologyuk.org)**

The CBA is a major piece in the mosaic of regional and specialist societies, and amateur archaeology organisations across the country, and also produces the 'Archaeology' periodical. The website has contacts for a range of training courses and volunteer experiences, as well as funding opportunities. The CBA also organises a series of workplace training schemes that are an alternative route into professional employment.

### **The Chartered Institute for Archaeologists – [www.archaeologists.net](http://www.archaeologists.net)**

The ClfA is the most widely recognised professional body representing archaeologists in the UK, and sets targets for both employers and employees in professional training and standards, and employment conditions. The ClfA produces a fortnightly jobs bulletin for members, also covering heritage management and academia.

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## Missed opportunities and unfulfilled obligations: The case for using historic house museums as a vehicle for engaging with controversial and dissonant issues



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### Abstract

Many historic house museums in the United Kingdom have had a long and tumultuous history before coming into the public realm. This essay argues that the majority of approaches to interpretation taken at these properties represent variations along a similar theme, that of ‘telling the story of the house and its occupants’ through the material culture of objects, furnishings and where possible, the records. What is often missing is the social and political relevance of these houses and their stories to the world today, how their links to (often deeply controversial) past practices are reflected in contemporary society. Using case studies from the United States, and in line with Sandell’s (2007, 5) view that museums have the “potential to function as an agent of social change”, I argue that these properties are uniquely situated to probe and explore these issues. Therefore curators have an *obligation* to their communities and the public at large to develop their offering and to act as agents of positive change in society.

### Historic house museums - a rich and unique resource

Historic house museums, as all museums, have an obligation to serve their public in all its forms (Benton and Watson, 2010, 129) which presents curators with a plethora of challenges and opportunities as they strive to meet this responsibility. The premise of this essay is that historic house museums, in particular, have an obligation to drive contemporary social change. As Tilden (2007: 35) argued, “the chief aim of interpretation is not instruction but provocation”. Many historic house museums, due to the nature of their histories, represent a uniquely fitting environment in which to encourage dialogue and the exchange of ideas around associated contemporary subjects that are often controversial and sometimes emotionally challenging. Raising social awareness through critical engagement with the subject matters covered in the interpretation should play a central part in the role of historic house museums.

By their very nature as a former place of dwelling, house museums are instantly intelligible to visitors on the most primal level (Donnelly 2002: 3) and thereby enjoy an innate advantage over many other types of museums. This is of fundamental importance and imbues historic

house museums with a rich emotional connection on which to draw. However, the curators of historic house museums have been traditionally conservative in their approach to interpretation. The majority of their efforts have focused on telling heteronormative narratives of the male socio-elite in a way that at best minimises and at worst ignores the social history of whole segments of society, nullifying the complex web of influences and relationships between them all (Oram, 2011). This bias in interpretation focus is what Smith (2006: 30) identified as the Authorised Heritage Discourse (AHD).

Defining the interpretive approach to take in these properties however, is by no means a straightforward procedure, as Hughes (2008, 897) explains:

“These are spaces which have evolved and continue to evolve in response to successive inhabitants, rather than museum objects removed from their context, and great sensitivity is required to acknowledge and address these intensely personal values within the pluralist framework of culturally constructed heritage values”.

The approaches taken by historic house museums can be grouped into two main categories; traditional and theme based presentation and interpretation.

### **Traditional approaches to interpretation**

Young (2007, 59) has identified a range of genres of historic house museums that fall within the broad category of ‘traditional approaches’: “Houses become museums as monuments to heroes, monuments to collectors, monumentalized specimens of design or innovation, monumental commemoration and/ or interpretation of historic events and associations”. It could be said that on the whole, the majority of historic house museums in the U.K. today are presented through one of these traditional genres. These approaches have been criticised by Smith (2006, 30) for reinforcing the AHD through the emphasis on the preservation of the buildings, objects and stories of the elite social classes over that of vernacular architecture and the stories from those of lower socio-economic groups. Consequently, the picture of the white, male head of the house as a historical figure of leadership has become the standard national heritage identity in England (Smith, 2006: 115).

More recently the AHD has begun to be challenged by an increase in the number of vernacular properties being preserved, restored and opened to the public as house museums, a good example of which are the Birmingham back-to-back terraced houses, built around a central communal courtyard. Here the interpretation focuses solely on the working class people who

lived there using a 'stop the clock' approach to present the homes and shops frozen as time capsules ranging from the 1840s through to the 1970s (National Trust, n.d.). However, with the majority of historic house museums in the U.K. still squarely concentrated on the properties and past lives of the social elite, there is clearly an imbalance of representation.

An argument can be made that these more traditional approaches to presenting historic houses, whether applied to properties of the social elite or of the vernacular kind, are based predominantly on the practice of transferring knowledge from the museum to the visitor. The house museum is visited to learn *about* history, rather than *through* history. The experience, by its very nature, is constructed in a way that does not easily promote a deeper level of learning or engagement beyond the appreciation—in the case of the house museums of the social elite—of a fine building full of fine things and set in a fine landscape. While appreciation of this sort can be a goal in itself, the lack of critical engagement with the issues raised through the interpretation represents a missed opportunity to explore wider themes.

### **Theme-based Interpretation**

In contrast to these more traditional approaches, the core of the interpretive emphasis of theme-based interpretation surrounds the ideas, issues and actions connected with the person or people associated with the house. Crucially, the effect their lives had on contemporary society and the influence on our lives today. The interpretation is more an exploration, dealing in conflicts and controversies and in so doing, paving the way for ongoing dialogue.

Such an approach is favoured at Down House, the former home of Charles Darwin. Here, only a handful of rooms downstairs have been returned to the way they were at the time that Darwin inhabited the house, including his study, complete with specimens. These rooms provide the necessary background information on Darwin as a scientist and family man (Hems, 2006, 193) and help to contextualise and facilitate understanding of the themes presented in the rest of the museum. The upstairs of the house is dedicated to exploring Darwin's scientific discoveries and covers the implications of the publication of the sensational *On the Origin of Species*, which caused a tsunami of outrage and public outpourings of all kinds, in all sectors of society at the time, the ripples of which can still be felt today. Importantly, the museum also provides space for temporary exhibitions exploring the significance of Darwin's findings to contemporary research (Hems, 2006: 194).

### **Taking it further – the historic property as an agent of social and political change**

More recently there has been a shift towards the concept of 'useable pasts' where historical issues are explicitly linked to the present (Christensen, 2010). In order for this to be most

effective as a learning experience, the museum visitor needs to not only be presented with the opportunity to explore the multivocality surrounding the issues presented, but also actively encouraged to critically engage with the materials (Paul, 1990: xvi).

In 1998 the International Coalition of Historic Site Museums of Conscience was formed and subsequently issued the following statement:

“We hold in common the belief that it is the obligation of historic sites to assist the public in drawing connections between the history of our site and its contemporary implications. We view stimulating dialogue on pressing social issues and promoting humanitarian and democratic values as a primary function.” (Abram, 2005, 38)

A member of this coalition is the East Side Tenement Museum in New York (Figures 1 and 2). This site, once an apartment block housing nearly 7000 working class immigrants from a wide range of countries, has been transformed into a museum exploring both the personal stories of individual immigrants, and the complex web of issues surrounding the subject of immigration, past and present (Tenement Museum, 2015). The museum operates on a guided tour system, where visitors are shown around a series of apartments reconstructed to reflect those of various families. However, it is the programme of ‘Kitchen Conversations’, operating since 2004, which made the Lower East Side Tenement Museum the first historic site in the United States to offer “ongoing public dialogue on immigration” (Abram, 2007). In these conversations, integral to the tour, visitors discuss ideas, opinions and experiences of immigrants and immigration over tea and biscuits.

The discussions are often challenging, and the facilitators are trained to maintain a neutral stance, acting only to encourage open and respectful dialogue between participants (Abram, 2007). Participants may not leave with a consensus of belief, but this is not the point. The value of such a programme lies in its ability to meld historically accurate interpretation with the provision of both the physical and the intellectual space to foster debate surrounding this often divisive issue, in a contextually relevant environment.



Figure 1: The exterior of the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. The building was constructed using cheap materials and many apartments had no running water. (Image: Fletcher6, Creative Commons, 2012).



Figure 2: The interior of one of the tenement apartments in the Lower East Side Tenement Museum, highlighting the cramped conditions of immigrants living there. Following a tour of the building, encompassing a range of different apartment types, visitors take part in an open discussion around both past and contemporary issues to do with immigration.

Also in New York, The Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation was created in 2000 and is “dedicated to educating current and future generations about Gage’s work *and its power to drive contemporary social change*” (The Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation 2009, author’s emphasis). The purpose of the museum is explicit: to continue Gage’s work in human rights and be proactive in enabling social change. In the house itself, only one room reflects the domestic life of the Gage family and the rest of the property is themed to reflect Joslyn Gage’s work. The museum includes rooms dedicated to the separation of church and state, Native American sovereignty and women’s rights. These are all issues which continue to be both of crucial importance and highly controversial today.

The museum’s drive for social change comes from the ‘Girl Ambassadors for Human Rights Programme’, run by the Foundation. This nationally recognised programme supports young women between the ages of 15 and 17 to actively build links with other girls across the world, connects with NGOs working in the field of women’s rights while also focusing on women in politics (The Matilda Joslyn Gage Foundation, 2014). An alumna of the programme explained the impact the experience has had on her:



“The Girl Ambassadors for Human Rights program has indubitably changed my life...While I learned a tremendous amount from girls internationally, I also learned from our own girls in Syracuse. We learned from each other, taught each other, and formed strong relationships with each other... Learning about gender inequality on a global scale impacted me tremendously; I knew I wanted to do everything I could to fight injustices in our society.” (Miller, 2009)

These two examples illustrate museums dedicated to their role as agents of social change and represent a snapshot of the potential stored in the tangible and intangible collections of historic house museums. Using bold and imaginative approaches to embracing difficult histories, these museums drive both vital debate and social action.

### **Potential applications of this approach in the United Kingdom**

Historic house museums in the United Kingdom represent a rich resource that could, and should, provide visitors with opportunities to engage critically with past and contemporary issues. Four possible sites are outlined below.

Properties such as Harewood House in Yorkshire and John Pinney’s town house in Bristol were built and maintained with profits derived directly from the use of slave labour (English Heritage, n.d.), yet this incredibly important part of British history is either largely ignored, or at best given minimum attention in the interpretation at these properties. This represents a significant and disturbing omission in the histories being told at these museums. There are increasing calls from heritage professionals and archaeologists for the links between the past and the present at such sites to be candidly stated and thoroughly explored through public engagement (Christensen, 2010). Embedded in the bricks, soaked into the rich textiles and ingrained in the exquisitely carved furniture of these magnificent properties are the blood, sweat and tears of slaves. In these surroundings lies an exceptional opportunity not only to explore the past, but also to confront and examine the faces of modern-day slavery and indentured working practices, both in the UK and across the world.

An opportunity to explore issues surrounding sexuality and discrimination is presented at Bletchley Park, the location of secret codebreaking activity during World War 2 and now a museum which includes information on Alan Turing (Figures 3 and 4). Turing was a genius mathematician and is now recognised as the father of computer science and artificial intelligence. His actions in developing a computer to crack the Nazi encryption device, the Enigma machine, saved countless lives, but he was later convicted of 'gross indecency' for homosexual acts which, at that time, were illegal. He chose chemical castration over imprisonment and two years later he committed suicide. Turing was granted a posthumous royal pardon in 2013 but another estimated 50,000 homosexuals, also charged under the same law, remain criminals (BBC, 2013). Bletchley Park, once the site of an intellectual battle to preserve Britain's freedom from outside oppression, represents a unique environment in which to open and facilitate dialogue around modern matters of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights.

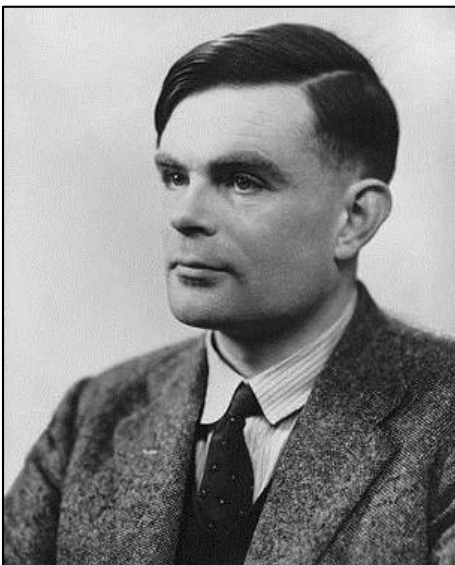


Figure 3: Alan Turing. His contribution to creating our society as we know it cannot be underestimated. (Image: Daily Telegraph 2009).

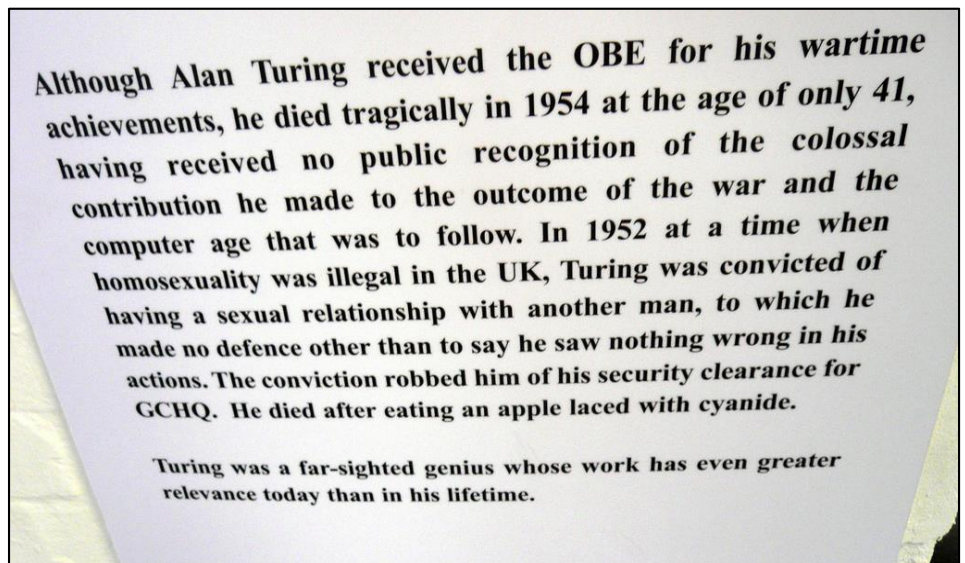


Figure 4: Bletchley Park's information board on the subject of Alan Turing's death by suicide. It does not mention his sentence of chemical castration and the interpretation offers no further discussion of these events, or the issues surrounding them. (Image: Doctorow, 2008).

Using the Lower East Side Tenement Museum as a model, a similar programme could be implemented at the Birmingham Back-to-Backs museum (Figure 5), with facilitated discussions centering on class issues in contemporary Britain. As one of a minority of vernacular house museums dedicated to telling the stories of the working classes, the back-to-backs represent an exceptional opportunity to explore such a complex and multi-layered issue which resonates so strongly through life in Britain today. With a thoughtful and dedicated marketing and outreach programme, visitors from lower socio-economic groups within the

United Kingdom—traditionally under-represented in heritage audiences—would perhaps be more likely to visit and take part.



Figure 5: The central, communal courtyard of the Birmingham Back-to-Backs. The museum focuses on the lives of the working class people who called these small, crowded spaces home. Visiting is by guided tour only, in groups of eight people, contributing to it being an ideal choice to pilot a programme such as the 'Kitchen Conversations' held at the Lower East Side Tenement Museum. (Image: Creative Commons, 2014).

### **Some factors to consider**

Transforming a historic house museum from a place that merely interprets history to one that also promotes contemporary social change will require in-depth research and careful planning. A fundamental decision needs to be taken on what kind of approach or combination of approaches will be utilised. These could range from the addition of a layer of interpretation to existing resources aimed at encouraging critical engagement and reflection, through to organised sessions of discussion between visitors or developing a programme aimed at engaging a specific demographic group. The museum will also need to decide whether visitors can choose to engage or whether engagement forms an integral part of every visit. Some of these decisions may come down to practicalities such as available space and of course, funding. The need for committed and well trained staff is crucial to the success of any programme where controversial and challenging themes are explored or public dialogue is encouraged. Well trained staff are also more likely to be or become supportive of the programme as they feel secure in their capabilities to deal with potentially difficult situations that may arise.

Change can be a difficult process, especially if the museum initiates a radical alteration to what they normally offer to the public. This can lead to disparity between the visiting public's expectations and their experiences, with the potential to impact negatively on the site. Strong leadership and effective communication is a key factor in preventing this and seeking advice from those museums that have been successful in running such programmes is of fundamental importance. Similarly, advice should be sought to enable a balance to be struck between exploring these sensitive and often emotionally engaging issues and the potential to cause empathy fatigue in visitors. The tone of the interpretation or programme can help achieve this balance. The neutrality of the facilitating staff of the East Side Tenement Museum is no doubt a key factor in the positive reception the programme has received from visitors. This is not the traditional authoritative voice of the museum presenting facts to be taken as read, but a historic site, with a relevant history, providing space and resources for debate and discussion on important issues.

### **Conclusion**

This essay has argued that, due to their historical significance and unique ability to connect with visitors as places of dwelling, historic house museums should, where appropriate, introduce interpretation or programmes aimed specifically at linking their pasts with contemporary experiences. This will often involve groups who are routinely marginalised or discriminated against, both in society in general and explicitly within the heritage sector. This includes, but is not limited to, women, immigrants, members of the LGBT community, lower socio-economic groups and indigenous peoples. Implementing such an approach would represent a fundamental shift from traditional exhibition content and delivery and challenge the hegemony of the AHD by introducing more dissonant heritage.

The United Kingdom has a long, complicated and often unsettling history, much of which can be explored in historic house museums and their stories. Contemporary society presents challenges that are inextricably linked to our past and these narratives. These sites have an obligation to operate as agents of social change by actively encouraging and facilitating open and informed critical engagement around the contemporary manifestations of the historical issues they present.

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## The importance of London for craft and industry in medieval England

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Understanding medieval London can be a struggle, and poses a rather difficult picture for archaeologists. Although the archaeological evidence is usually good in confines of the medieval London walls, and is in especially good condition along the Themes, due to the waterlogged conditions to the sites, which has provided excellent evidence for craft and industry in Medieval London. The evidence in the inner London boroughs is sporadic and variable, with few substantial remains, often due to the Victorian and Georgian cellars which destroyed layers of earlier archaeology. There are certain medieval industries for which archaeological evidence is particularly abundant, including stone working, metals, pottery and tile, brick, glass, leather, textiles, antler and bone, and wood (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 121). Within modern perspectives, the relationship between towns and industry is so clearly set that it must be constantly remembered that the majority of craft and industry in the medieval period occurred in the countryside. The countryside generally had better living standards than the densely occupied urban landscape, where the majority of workshops were accommodated within the same building as housing (Pearson, 2005, 50). This paper will focus on the finer details of craft and industry in medieval London, and discuss why these artisans located themselves in urban areas.

Why were artisans permitted to practise in towns, rather than in the countryside, where fuel, labour and water would be nearby? Towns provided vital access to trade routes and merchants for their raw materials and finished products (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 121). On the other hand, the cost of property in urban settings was much higher than in the countryside, varying between main and side streets as well as suburbs, and this also affected the location of urban industry (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 121). As land became scarce in urban settlements, narrower plots and space was used to create new buildings and structures. Contemporary shop houses in London often rose three or more stories, accommodating several families, and in central districts plots and buildings were repeatedly divided, leading to fears over the degeneration of neighbourhood quality (Keene in Waller, 2000, 90). Despite these negatives, around 175 specialised trades have been recorded in London (Keene in Waller, 2000, 79), which is a much higher number than anywhere else in the country.



There are certain medieval industries for which archaeological evidence is particularly abundant, including stone working, metals, pottery and tile, brick, glass, leather, textiles, antler and bone, and wood (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 121). However, using archaeological evidence to understand medieval craft and industry can be problematic, given the apparent lack of distinction between work and domestic spaces. Today it might be possible to distinguish amateur from professional industry through the material evidence—evidence of permanent workshops, investment in equipment or the scale of production, for example—but medieval industry is far less clear cut. Artisans of that period would have had a much smaller output in goods, and less investment in equipment than might be seen today (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 121). Consequently, the difficulty lies in demonstrating that a particular activity took place on site, and in ascertaining the scale of that activity.

Organically-based industries often leave very little archaeological material, making them difficult to trace, and sometimes the evidence is only indirect: spindle whorls are a good example. Tanners required large amounts of urine for the preparation and tanning of leather, and often the only archaeological evidence for this is the pots and jugs used as urinals. The leather industry was of great importance within medieval Britain, catering for clothing necessities, agricultural purposes and military purposes (Cherry, 1991, 295). Hides were a waste product from butchery, and tanners had the sole right to purchase, so the tanning industry expanded swiftly during the medieval period (Saltzman, 1923, 172). The discovery of cattle hooves and horns, with the absence of any other bones can be seen as an indicator of tanning (Burns, 2012), the hooves and horns often being left attached to the hides, as they were all waste materials of butchery (Burns, 2012). At Long Lane, Southwark, an excavation in 2002 uncovered a concentrated region of tanning activity, suggesting a continuation of tanning in the area with evidence dating to the post medieval period due to the discovery of horn core lined pits (see Figure 1; McKinley, 2006). The location of a tannery is often determined by a nearby stream or river, source of cattle and oak trees—the raw materials needed for tanning—and it would mostly likely be located on the edge of a settlement due to the noxious nature of tanning. The Southwark site, having sources for cattle and bark, and also being near water, saw continuation of the industry into the medieval period (Keene in Waller, 2000, 83).



Figure 3: Post Medieval Tanning pit 1005 with horn core lining (McKinley, 2006)

Bone, as another butchery by-product, was likewise an important animal product used in medieval crafts. This craft is often apparent from manufacturing debris, such as shoulder blades with holes sawn out of them, and also from indirect evidence such as the tools used (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 132). Specialist bone workers often paired up with other artisans to create products, for example bone spectacle frames from the 15<sup>th</sup>-century (see Figure 2; Blair, 1991, 152).

Documentary sources for the fur industry show that the majority of pelts were imported from Scandinavia and the Baltic (Sawyer, 1993, 34). However, archaeological evidence for this trade is limited, and these sources are the only substantial evidence that furs were imported from the continent. The occasional discovery of bones from extremities of fur-bearing mammals does support the historical sources: such bones were sometimes left on the pelt after skinning as a guarantee that the fur was genuine (O'Connor, 1991, 259). There has been evidence for such crafts at Aylesbury and at York (Jones, 1983; O'Connor, 1991, 256). Similar to the fur industry, antler was used in numerous industries (MacGregor, 1991). In the early medieval period it seems to have been mostly used for the production of combs, but the comb industry later moved on to the use of wood and the importance of antler declined (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 133). There is a clear over-representation of antler in urban archaeological deposits in comparison to deer bones, therefore suggesting that antler was important to urban settlements as a raw material for artisans.

Cattle horns were also used for numerous industries, including the manufacture of combs, lanterns and windows (MacGregor, 1991). Horn, however, rarely survives except in anaerobic conditions, and when it does survive it is difficult to identify the origin of the horn. Yet deposits of horn cores are a relatively common find (see figure 1), especially in early post-medieval settings, as the horn core is often all that survives as a waste material of horn production, in which the entire horn is boiled in order to remove the horn from its core. Tanneries and horners are often found in close proximity as they both used a by-product of butchery.



Figure 4: Bone Spectacles from Trig Lane Excavations (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 132)

The weaving industry used wool as the main raw material to weave cloth, and due to the importance and value of wool there are numerous documentary sources which describe the organisation the industry (Crowfoot *et al*, 1992, 15). There are several distinct stages within this industry, from wool collection to tailoring, often coinciding with changes in location and artisan (Miller and Hatcher, 1995, 93-127), and each stage has its own archaeological 'type fossils' (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 133). Interestingly, the tanners, leatherworkers, weavers and woolmen were the only organic product industries to have had guilds, perhaps due to the importance of their industry to the city of London.

In comparison to organic industries, the archaeological evidence for non-organic industries, from tools to finished products, is vast. A large range of raw materials were extracted from the ground, and although the majority of such material was used for building, numerous smaller artefacts, for use in the home or for personal ornaments, survive. Evidence from London

shows that the raw materials were most often transported into towns to be worked: St. Alban's house, for example (Pritchard, 1991, 154). Despite the inability to identify where the shale was mined, it has been suggested that the source was either Kimmeridge (Dorset) or Whitby (Yorkshire), indicating the transport of raw materials over a vast distance (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 124). Amber was also a widely sought after material, and evidence of bead manufacture has been found across London, for instance at Baynard's Castle (Schofield with Maloney, 1998, 256). Stone mortars were an essential part of a medieval kitchen for grinding herbs, spices and medicines, but also used in conjunction with other industries, for example for grinding the bark used during the manufacture of leather (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 125). There is little archaeological evidence for the creation of stone mortars, so it has been suggested that these vessels were finished at the quarry site (Dunning, 1977, 326). A final use of stone within urban settings was the creation of lime mortar, and numerous medieval lime kiln sites have been identified in towns (Baker *et al.* 1979, 46). Limestone kilns are usually situated on the outskirts of urban settlements, with access to running water, which was a necessary component of the process.

Blacksmithing and the creation of iron objects was commonly carried out in urban areas, but archaeology is currently unable to identify the scale of the industry due to soil conditions (Geddes, 1991). The smelting of iron was mostly carried out in rural rather than urban areas, due to the location of the ore (Evans and Davison, 1985). Smelting produces large amounts of 'slag' which is commonly found on archaeological sites: for example, in Cheapside, London, 250kg of industrial slag was excavated in a small 10<sup>th</sup> or 11<sup>th</sup> century building, perhaps suggesting a concentration of the iron industry in the area (Hill and Woodger, 1999, 37). Slag is the most common waste product of metalworking, and is often found in the form of 'hearth bottoms' which were formed when molten slag pooled up during the smelting process. Another frequent find on ironworking sites are tuyeres, conical cubes of clay which were wrapped around the nozzle of bellows to protect them from heat (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 126). Offcuts of metal are also found, and can be used to help distinguish between metal casting and the working of sheet metal (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 137). Such archaeological evidence can help advance the understanding of manufacturing processes.

Copper alloys were produced from a mixture of copper, zinc, lead and tin, all of which were imported into London in the form of ingots, either as a ready mixed alloy, or as a pure metal. Excavations do sometimes uncover unused metal ingots: for example, a 12<sup>th</sup> century pit in London contained a number of lead ingots, perhaps ready for use in the production of artefacts from lead or pewter, a lead alloy (Schofield and Vince, 126). However, archaeological

evidence of raw materials usually comes in the form of small off-cuts of ingots and moulds from the production of the ingots themselves (Blair *et al*, 1991, 59). From the twelfth century onwards there had been a prosperous industry in producing pewter tableware objects in central London. However, few artefacts survive, possibly due to the fact that pewter objects are easily melted down to make new ones (Gaimster, 1987, 347). An excavation at Moorgate in 1999 uncovered large amounts of slag, furnace lining, crucibles and the moulds for copper-alloy casting dating from the twelfth century. As the area was seen as unsuitable for residential purposes due to the nearby Walbrook Stream, it may represent an industrial centre, with large scale craft production occurring on the site (Murray and Liddle, 2003, 89).



Figure 5: Medieval Copper Alloy Harness Bell [online available at: <https://finds.org.uk/database/images/image/id/126059> [last accessed 10/12/2015]

Metalworking is perhaps the most distinct of the medieval industries, due to the numerous crafts and specialisms within metalworking and the large number of workers who were involved. Where Aldermanbury met London Wall Street, 2.4m thick deposits of medieval slag and bronze waste were recorded, the depth of the deposit suggesting long term or large scale metal working in the area (Schofield with Maloney, 1998, 30). The objects which were made and sold in this area ranged from buckles to candlesticks, copper bells for harnesses (see fig. 3) to copper bells for churches and monasteries, items which were then sold all over the country (Schofield, 2011, 144). Bell casting required the digging of a large pit in which the clay mould could be made. These pits are usually located near the church where the bell was to be hung, rather than at a bell-founders workshop. Such workshops are instead usually identified through the vast quantities of bell mould, metal scrap found at a site. However, due to the reuse of bell moulds, crucibles and slag as hard core or metalling, the discovery of bell

moulds is not sufficient evidence to prove the existence of a foundry site (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 140).

Metalworking was not an industry for the heart of London: evidence from Poultry suggests that in the 12<sup>th</sup> century it had been a thriving area of metalworking for two centuries previous, yet by the early 13<sup>th</sup> century the area had again changed. The artisans who made the products seem to have relocated elsewhere, but the shops which sold the finished products remained, particularly specialising in the sale of armour (Schofield, 2011, 144). The forges had begun to move to more marginal areas of the city (Freshwater, 1996, 42) and the areas of production and sale were topographically separate, presumably due to the price of rent in Poultry and nearby areas (Schofield, 2011, 144). This also coincided with 12<sup>th</sup> century fears of fire, with new regulations implemented in an attempt to lower the risk of such a disaster. The majority of metalworking industries had their own guilds, perhaps partly due to the considerable trade they brought to the city but also as the industries were highly specialised and were not open to the poorer classes.

Although potters play an archaeologically important role due to the proliferation of ceramics, they seem to have held a low status in medieval London: they are hardly mentioned in historical records, and the potters never had a guild (Schofield, 2011, 126). Archaeological evidence has therefore provided the basis for the modern understanding of the industry and how it fitted into the medieval landscape. Ceramic vessels were mostly used for cooking and dining, with more elaborate vessels being found for elite tableware (Thomas, 2001, 120). The numerous different ceramic typologies that have been created demonstrates the large number of different wares and pottery fabrics that were used in London (Schofield, 2011, 127). The lack of records for ceramic production in London is perhaps due to the larger scale pottery industry in rural areas, and pottery was certainly imported from the Thames Valley region and the Surrey-Hampshire border area.

In comparison to the Roman period, glass-making was a relatively rare industry across the urban areas until the end of the medieval period (Charleston, 1991). The majority of window glass was imported from Flanders in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, despite the fragility of the glass. Schofield and Vince (2003, 139) suggest that perhaps there was less danger of breakage by transporting such materials over sea than by cart. Yet there is archaeological and documentary evidence to show that glass was made in the British Isles, with raw materials being imported from the continent and beyond. The technology of making glass in the medieval period produced poor quality glass in comparison to the large quantities of Roman glass that survives. Manufacturing methods had not advanced enough to create blue and red coloured glass, and documentary sources indicates that blue glass objects were often created

by melting down blue Roman glass (Biddle and Hunter, 1990, 357). The raw materials required for glass making perhaps required that the majority of glass making was located in rural wooded area with easy access to the wood, quartz sand and alkali needed. However, glass making does begin to occur in urban settlements from the 16<sup>th</sup> century onwards, when the replacement of stone vessels with glass bottles created a mass market for glass products and saw the industry becoming identified with towns (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 128).

Archaeological evidence has provided us with details of how urban crafts and industries were organised in towns. However, a difficulty arises when attempting to identify the difference between domestic or professional crafts, as discussed above. For example, baking was carried out on a domestic scale in most homes, but identifying whether an oven was that of an individual or a professional is challenging. It could be argued that the largest ovens represent professional bakers, and the smaller ovens individuals, but this may be too simplistic. Other crafts could have been undertaken on a part time basis if the raw materials were inexpensive, and therefore care must be taken when interpreting archaeological sites. For instance, the re-melting of glass or the casting of lead may have been undertaken within an urban tenement rather than at a purely industrial site (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 143).

Social topography was shaped by commerce and fabrication: artisans and merchants occupied street frontages, whereas the poorer populace lived in alleys, rented rooms or on the edge of the city. In contrast to rural settlements, both rich and poor lived in close proximity due to the intricacy of the markets, yet still in distinct niches (Keene in Waller, 2000, 93). Town planning can be inferred from regular features in street plans and property boundaries. In large towns, laid out as centres of trade in the late 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> centuries, a wide central market street was common, with side streets running off almost creating a grid pattern. Narrower lanes served the back of the properties on the market street. Elements of this patterning can be detected in London's complex plan (see fig. 4).



Figure 4: London (c. 1550) first published 1572. Open land with grazed livestock began within a few hundred yards of the wall. Suburban sprawl in Westminster is evident (Keene, 2000, 77)

The location of crafts and industries within London was dependant on numerous factors, and was often dictated by guilds and corporate regulations. Artisans were bound by these rules and regulations, but what archaeology has shown is that these crafts and industries were regularly relocated and never located in one place for long. Smoky or smelly industries such as metal foundries and tanneries were often located on the periphery of urban settlements. Distinct zoning occurring where industries were located with others using the same raw materials or needing running water (Keene in Waller, 2000, 85). For example, in the 11<sup>th</sup> century the streets off Cheapside were occupied by workers in metals and bone, with the gold-working quarter on the streets nearby. This zoning is also sometimes evident from street names and from the industrial waste which may remain. It can be argued that a symbiotic relationship existed between certain industries, such as horn workers and tanners who shared raw materials. Both would have been located near butchers to take advantage of the waste from butchery (Schofield and Vince, 2003, 144). Tanners may also have been located near carpenters, as the bark from carpentry waste could be used by the tanners. On the other hand, some industries may have been intentionally separated, perhaps due to the fire risk posed by smithing and smelting. There are also records of industries such as dyers polluting the river, which then meant that other industries were unable to use the water, so the guilds dictated where industries could locate, and placed dyers downstream from those who needed purer, unpolluted water.

Guildhalls served multiple functions, and were built and used by several associations. After the Reformation, artisans appropriated a number of religious halls. These guilds acted as



'shadow governments' to administer commerce inside the city, controlling those who could practise and the price of the goods they sold (Giles, 2005, 299). Guilds are understood to have encouraged their members' social and economic development through guild activities, and instituted strict moral codes, credit networks and business relationships to protect values and monopolies. Some guilds had more power and influence than others; the goldsmith's guild was a particularly influential guild in London.

There are parts of London's medieval history that are gone forever, destroyed by building work in the Georgian and Victorian period. Archaeology cannot illuminate these, which leaves a puzzle to piece together with many pieces missing. Despite this, it is clearly to be seen that the crafts and industries of medieval London located themselves dependant on the raw materials available, the resources needed to build or craft their finished product and the ever important trade routes. The latter certainly provided artisans with a clear reason to locate to London rather than perhaps York or Winchester. With London becoming an increasingly dominant export zone in England, it is apparent that artisans understood the power of being positioned in or near the city. The availability of raw materials is perhaps more complicated: often the raw materials are imported into the cities, which leaves the question of why industries were not simply located in rural areas where the raw materials would be cheaper and easily accessible. This essay argues that the move to urban areas was to take advantage of export opportunities and the protection which guilds offered craftsmen and artisans. These guilds were gaining increasing power within corporate London, able to dictate prices, goods sold and the practitioners themselves. Again, when looking at the resources needed this creates an interesting picture. For example, industries often needed water, but locating industries by the Thames was expensive and difficult as there was simply not enough space for every industry to be located by the waterfront. Several artisans simply found it easier to locate themselves in rural areas, or within villages surrounding London. What this shows, is that although these industries understood the importance and pull of London, they also understood the difficulties of attempting to fight for prime locations within London itself.

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