

An apprentice's perspective: upskilling the workforce through academic and commercial collaboration via heritage apprenticeships

Phoebe Wild PCIfA (10648), Project Officer, MSDS Marine Limited

Diver measuring a cannon on the Bronze Bell protected wreck site. Credit: MSDS Marine 2021

The Historic England Trailblazer Apprenticeships provide an excellent example of collaboration between the academic and commercial archaeological spheres. The apprenticeships have been developed to 'support our sector to train and maintain a skilled workforce' and are a joint venture between employers and training providers, which are often universities and colleges.

In 2021 my employer, MSDS Marine, offered me the opportunity to participate in the Archaeological Specialist Level 7 Apprenticeship, which is supported by ClfA. The apprenticeship includes an MA in Archaeological Practice provided by University of Wales Trinity St David. The MA is offered as a part-time, distance-learning degree. I will complete the whole apprenticeship by the end of 2024. The

programme requires commitment from both the apprentice and the employer; MSDS Marine 'release' me from work duties for 20 per cent of my time. This gives me one day per week to dedicate my time towards working on the apprenticeship by attending seminars, writing assignments and completing CPD opportunities.

This set up is very manageable for both me and my employer; it enables me to develop as a historic environment professional in a work context while working towards a substantive academic qualification. A key part of the programme is the requirement for employers to work with the apprentice to provide opportunities to ensure they can demonstrate specific knowledge, skills, and behaviours (KSBs). These KSBs were developed alongside the ClfA Member (MClfA)-level accreditation competency matrices and are designed to establish that the apprentice has undergone appropriate and meaningful professional development during the apprenticeship.

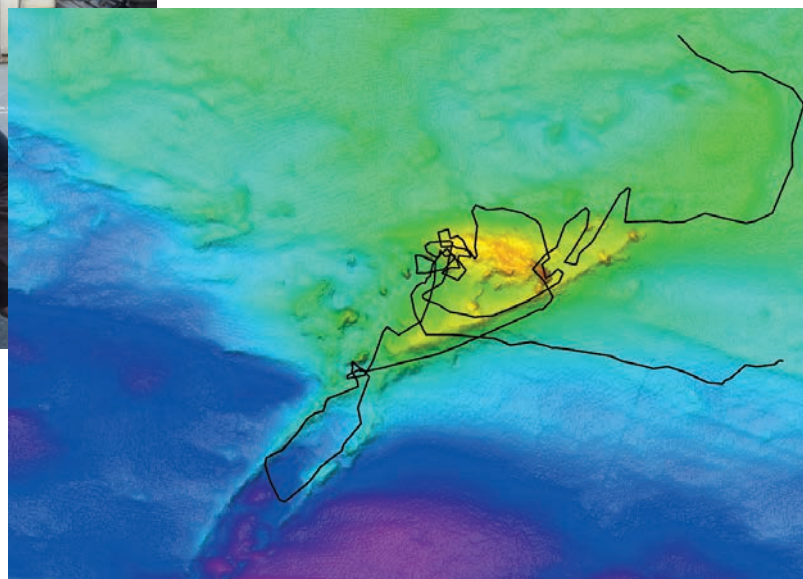
The need to acquire these KSBs encourages me to seek out opportunities for CPD that I may not have previously considered. For example, I attended a ClfA workshop 'Practising ethical competence in archaeology' to enhance my capacity to 'apply an awareness of professional judgement and ethical behaviour', which is one of the required behaviours.

The KSBs make me consider how I work too; when I'm undertaking research, writing reports and assignments, and interacting with my colleagues I am constantly considering whether I am demonstrating appropriate knowledge, skills or behaviours. This self-reflection is important for my professional development. In this way the apprenticeship provides a robust learning structure and gives me clear goals to work towards that can be built into my employer's existing Professional Development Review system.

The seminars and assignments provided as part of the MA are directly relevant to



Divers filling out cannon recording sheets; scans of these were part of the project archive. Credit: MSDS Marine 2021



Route of tracked diver survey of the London protected wreck site. Credit: MSDS Marine 2021

my job and have already had a positive impact on my work. The first module, *Archaeological Research Methods*, included a seminar on archaeological data archiving and deposition, an element of the archaeological process that I was previously aware of but by no means knowledgeable about. The seminar covered the importance of creating reusable data and signposted the relevant guidelines for creating proper archives for archaeological projects, particularly the *CifA Standard and guidance for the creation, compilation, transfer and deposition of archaeological archives*. Methods for archive deposition were also discussed, including how to identify appropriate data repositories, eg, the Archaeological Data Service. The related assignment has tasked me with creating a metadata statement for a dataset according to the ADS standard. This has given me the understanding and tools to produce the full archive for a work project I was involved in – the inspection, survey, investigation, recording and monitoring of the ‘Bronze Bell’ wreck that MSDS Marine undertook in 2021 on behalf of CHERISH. The completed archive has been accepted and uploaded to the National Monuments Record of Wales. Being able to produce good quality archives for archaeological projects is a key skill for a historic environment professional, a skill that the MA has given me.

The second MA module, *Archaeological Project Design and Delivery*, focused on

project management and planning. These skills are rapidly becoming important for me to develop for my career. Seminar and assignment topics included project initiation, budgeting, health and safety, project evaluation, and the application of Historic England’s project managers’ guide: *Management of Research Projects in the Historic Environment*. One assignment had me assessing the success of a project design against how the project went, which pushed me to consider the real-world impediments to successful adherence to a project design. The project I reviewed was the tracked diver survey of the wreck of the *London* undertaken by MSDS Marine in 2021 for Historic England. I was involved in the project fieldwork and reporting as a team member, but the MA assignment compelled me to think like a project manager, an invaluable learning opportunity.

The upcoming modules include *Archaeological Project Reporting* and *Archaeological Specialist Practice*. By the time I have completed the apprenticeship, the balance of commercial experience and training provided by MSDS Marine and the academic teaching provided by University of Wales Trinity St David will have enabled me to cultivate professional skills and gain new qualifications integral to building my career.

More information about apprenticeships can be found here:

<https://historicengland.org.uk/services-skills/training-skills/work-based-training/heritage-apprenticeships/>

uwtsd.ac.uk/apprenticeships/archaeological-specialist-ma/



Phoebe Wild

Phoebe works for MSDS Marine as a project officer working predominantly in development control, where her work supports EIAs for offshore and coastal development through desk-based assessment and research. Phoebe is also involved in fieldwork by operating a tracking system for diver surveys and she also contributes to public outreach.