

Amplifying the voices of student and early-career archaeologists

ClfA Early Careers Group Conference 2022



Megan Schlanker PCIfA (9238), Chair of ClfA Early Careers Special Interest Group

On 27 July 2022, the ClfA Early Careers Special Interest Group hosted our second ever Student and Early Career conference, working in partnership with the Council for British Archaeology and as part of the Festival of Archaeology. The conference was hosted digitally, and aimed to platform students and early-career archaeologists, regardless of age or background, and to give them the opportunity to gain presentation experience, chair a session and network with peers. The conference was open to speakers studying archaeology or an associated subject, undertaking training or apprenticeships, or in the first 18 months of employment in an archaeological profession.

To encourage participation we provided guidance on how to write an abstract and what chairing entails, and offered one-to-one meetings for speakers to chat through their presentations, ask questions or practise using Zoom. We also provided a variety of presentation options.

This year we received abstracts from individuals from across the world. We had students studying subjects such as heritage crime, bioarchaeology and classics presenting alongside early-career professionals working in museums, archaeological engagement and archaeological fieldwork.

'During my time as the Council for British Archaeology's Website and Young People Assistant I was given the opportunity to work on the ClfA Early Career conference. I had various tasks

including editing the call for contributions document and text for the CBA website. I was also on email duty, monitoring the emails and creating a standard response to enquiries. I really enjoyed my involvement with the conference and seeing the behind-the-scenes workings of an event like this.'

Celyn Gale, Website and Young People Assistant, Council for British Archaeology

In the weeks leading up to the conference, we made the most of our social media presence to platform each of the speakers, their background, interests and presentation topic prior to the conference. This has helped us to expand our online network, whilst promoting the event.

While there was no set theme, the team behind the conference were able to

identify several strands, which became our five sessions: 'Ethical issues in archaeology and heritage', 'Standing buildings and monuments: destruction and conservation', 'Equality, diversity and inclusion in archaeology', 'Archaeological sciences', and a final, more varied session labelled 'Lucky dip'.

'As someone passionate about protecting cultural heritage, it was really great to see the positive response from other early-career archaeologists following my talk about what we can do to prevent heritage crime. It was wonderful to see this sentiment mirrored throughout the conference, with topics close to my heart such as the conservation of cultural heritage under threat and a discussion of the ethical representation of archaeology in popular media.'

George Veckungs, MSc Forensic Investigation of Heritage Crime student, Cranfield University

Examples of papers included 'Overlooked but on display: disability and human remains in museums', presented by Roisin Mackie, MSc Archaeology (Bioarchaeology) student at the University of Southampton, and 'Archaeological representation in simulation video games', presented by

Jessica Ellera of Oxford Archaeology. Roisin's presentation sparked thoughtful discussions on social media and during the conference, suggesting areas for future research, and Jessica prompted conversations on the representation of archaeological ethics in video games. Several presenters gave their first ever conference presentations, and reported feeling well supported and that this experience would help them in their future careers.

'Thank you so much for all your help before and during the conference. It really made it a lot less daunting for me. I hope to participate again next year!'

Cameron Barnard, Classics and Biology student, Acadia University

'I absolutely loved presenting my paper as well as listening to the other very interesting and insightful papers that were presented. Thank you so much for giving such a nice, comfortable platform where it is always amazing to partake in some of the most interesting archaeological discussions.'

Simran Kaur, MA Archaeology student, University College London

The event was a huge success, providing an opportunity for students and early-career professionals from around the world to share their ideas and experience a supportive conference tailored to them. Together, we built on the success and learning from last year's conference and hope to build on that even further in the future.

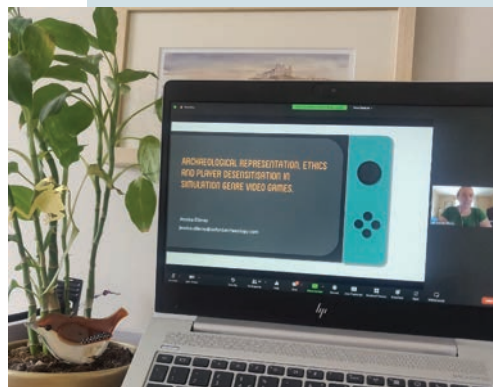
'I'm honoured to have been given this opportunity, and I couldn't have asked for a better start.'

Vanshika Poddar, Research Wing Member, Speaking Archaeologically

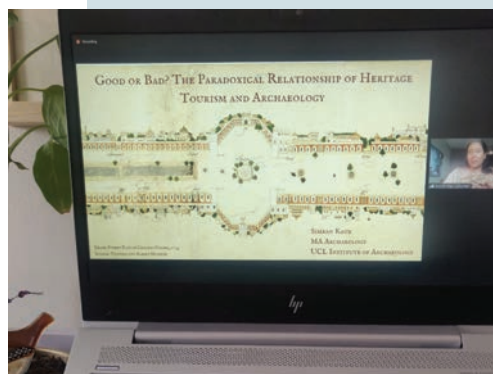
Over the next month or so we will be working with the CBA to edit the presentations into individual videos and share them via the CBA's YouTube channel and our own webpage. The Early Careers committee is also involved in planning a session for the upcoming ClfA Innovation Festival, which is scheduled for 10–14 October this year. We're so excited to continue working with early-career archaeologists, and to support them in sharing their innovative new ideas and research.



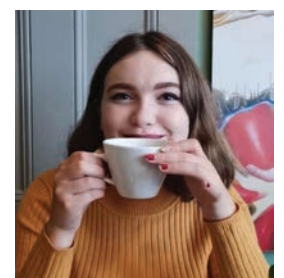
Jahanvi Sharma and Rithik Pramod co-authored a paper on the socio-cultural aspects of snake worship in Kerala. Credit: Joanne Kirton



Jessica Ellera on the representation of archaeology in simulation video games. Credit: Joanne Kirton



Simran Kaur gives a presentation on heritage tourism and archaeology. Credit: Joanne Kirton



Megan Schlanker

Megan is the Chair of the ClfA Early Careers Special Interest Group, and is currently employed as an archaeologist as part of the Museum of London Archaeology's Developer Services team. Megan is passionate about youth engagement, heritage education, and advocating for neurodiverse individuals both in and outside of the archaeology and heritage sector.