

The benefits to field staff of attending professional events

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Last year I attended a ClfA conference for the first time, with support from my employers, Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology Service. The programme over the three days covered a range of topics, and by far the best sessions I went to were the collaborative ones. I sat at a table with Peter Hinton (ClfA Chief Executive) and discussed the direction of standards and guidance for evaluation reports with him on an equal footing. The session 'On Health and Archaeology' on the final morning discussed the mental and physical impacts on field archaeologists and I shared a round-table discussion with a young Australian digger who highlighted the lack of women's PPE, having just come off the A14 project. It reinforced the value that the conference can have for staff on the ground, and the value that those staff can bring to the conference and the wider industry.

One of the downsides to ClfA2018 was the low number of junior field archaeologists present. I found that most people at the conference already knew each other, so it was difficult to mingle with lots of senior management in an informal setting. On the way back from conference I spoke to Rob Sutton from Cotswold Archaeology about the issue. He told me that Cotswold Archaeology will pay for any member of staff to attend if it benefits their professional development plan. Unfortunately, they have found the uptake from the field section is always very low (there were no takers in 2018).

In my view there need to be more diggers in the collaborative sessions, speaking up and being heard. This would be valuable not only to the individuals but to the industry as a whole. I decided to approach some of the bigger companies to ask them to do the same as Cotswold and offer to completely fund a few places for diggers to go to ClfA2019 in Leeds. Despite a few cold shoulders, I was glad to hear that Wessex, like Cotswold, already offer to pay for staff to attend providing that it benefits their CPD. Some companies, such as Albion Archaeology, have been sending staff to the conference for some time. This year, Oxford Archaeology decided to offer to send staff from each of their offices to the conference, fully paid.

The low number of junior staff attending the conference is not solely down to a lack of provision on the part of companies, of course. There is the feeling that the ClfA conference is just for management to 'hobnob'. If we can increase the participation of field staff, then perhaps we can change the perception that this is a club for managers. But it is up to everyone in the industry to help shape professional archaeology and attending conferences can help empower people to achieve that.

So, my advice would be that for those of you being offered the opportunity to go to the conference, take it. It will almost certainly benefit you now, and in your future career.



Excavating medieval ovens in Evesham. Credit: Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology



Albion Archaeology staff attending ClfA2019. Credit: Helen Parslow, Albion Archaeology



The Royal Armouries in Leeds was the venue for ClfA2019. Credit: Alex Llewellyn, ClfA

My experience of ClfA conference

Elsbeth Iliff PCIfA

As an archaeologist who started on a recognised training scheme, I was given the opportunity to attend the ClfA conference as a trainee and I have since attended twice more. As a member of the field team, I have found the main benefit of attending the conference has been the opportunity to connect with archaeologists from other units and share knowledge and ideas about commercial archaeology as a sector. This can have a day-to-day impact, helping to change systems of work to improve quality and standards, and hopefully have more long-term effects on the innovation and progress of the sector. Another more individual benefit of conference attendance is the opportunity to learn about aspects of archaeology you might not otherwise encounter, such as community engagement or photogrammetry.



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Peter Lovett

Peter is a Project Officer for Worcestershire Archive and Archaeology. He has previously worked for several companies, including Oxford Archaeology, MoLA and YAT, having graduated from Bournemouth University in 2003.



ClfA professional training

In addition to the annual conference, there are a range of other professional training events run by ClfA and our Area and Special interest Groups. Information about these is on our events calendar www.archaeologists.net/events. Some of the forthcoming events include:

- ClfA Archives Group: Archives Selection toolkit training workshops (see p28 for more information)
- ClfA CPD workshop series: What's going wrong with the desk-based assessment? (Wales, Manchester, Edinburgh)
- Scottish Group: An introduction to dendrochronology in Scottish archaeology, buildings and landscapes (venue TBC, 20 June)
- Graphics Group (AGM and book launch, June)
- Finds Group (AGM and event, Birmingham, 25 September)
- Wales (AGM and event, 8 November)