

# Digital tea breaks: my experience as an early career archaeologist

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As a recent MSc graduate and museum volunteer, when lockdown began I started really missing the regular conversations about archaeology and history that I'd taken for granted before. Cue emails floating into my inbox advertising a new initiative: digital, informal tea break chats about a series of topics open to all members of CIfA.

Being fairly junior in archaeology, I was initially a little nervous to drop into my first tea break, but the atmosphere was so jovial and welcoming with several new people (not just me!) that I soon relaxed. It helped that I saw a few familiar faces from a previous workshop on PCIfA accreditation, another really useful talk that made me feel a lot more comfortable with the application process.

What I really like about these tea breaks is getting to hear about archaeology and heritage all over the UK and projects in a wide range of archaeology sub-disciplines. In addition to that, I have really appreciated meeting archaeologists at all career stages, hearing how they got there, and I have never felt like I was being left out. I know I was a bit quiet in my first few tea breaks, preferring to listen more than talk but there were definitely opportunities for me to speak if I wanted to.

More than just welcoming, I felt like these tea breaks have been actively encouraging towards early career archaeologists (like me) by including highly relevant topics like entry routes into archaeology, advice for early career archaeologists and training and development opportunities. These have all been especially beneficial for me, from learning the essentials for entering commercial archaeology (such as a CSCS card), to how non-archaeological work or volunteer experience is still valuable in an application, to demystifying professional archaeology – for example, noting that academic vs commercial archaeology isn't an either/or situation.

There are plenty of other topics 'on tap' as well that aren't specifically targeting early career archaeologists but that are great for meeting others interested in the same field, and full of opportunities to learn. For example, the 'volunteering in archaeology, outside of excavation' talk signposted some useful resources that I wasn't aware of, such as guidance from Digital Skills for Heritage about working with young people online. Another advantage of these chats is that by virtue of having a group of archaeologists present, their advice can cover a whole range of

research/career interests – all you have to do is ask!

My favourite tea break so far was about archaeology in the media, something I'm highly interested in as I really enjoy outreach and community archaeology, especially after watching the inspiring panel 'Archaeology in the Time of Black Lives Matter'. Several topics were considered, such as problems with sensationalism and the struggles of balancing public access to excavations/research with ethical treatment of human remains. We also chatted about the issue of diversity in UK archaeology, how the popular image of 'the archaeologist' remains an older white man, and concerns about handling research topics in sensitive/politicised arenas. Surprisingly, my book blogging hobby turned out useful here as we discussed how sensitivity readers (often used to review book manuscripts) could be helpful in making archaeology more inclusive and self-aware. It was great to feel like I could make a tangible contribution to the discipline!

I'm glad I started attending these tea breaks regularly. Accessible and engaging, they're a great way to stay connected with archaeology during this surreal situation.

## New members



### Member (MCIfA)

6643 Martin Banikov	11098 Michelle Burpoe
5578 Ross Cameron	10779 Steven Bush
11011 Catherine Coutts	8229 David Cockcroft
11014 Lauren Hardiman	5658 Jenny Durrant
11085 Aidan Harte	11073 Daniel Firth
10979 Sophie Hueglin	11012 Lorna Goring
11074 Helen Saunders	9696 Samuel Griffiths
9678 Zoe Schofield	11076 Rosemary Lansley
11134 Philip Stastney	11190 Mateusz Polakowski
6294 Adam Thompson	11132 Jonathon Smith
	10919 Catherine Whitehouse

### Practitioner (PCIfA)

11075 James Alexander	8689 Georgina Barrett
8353 Frances Bradbury	11194 Shannon Birds
	11099 Michael Blake

### Associate (ACIfA)

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11259 Andrea Bonci
11097 Rose Britton
11261 Bronwyn Chomitz
10938 Simon Davies
9448 Jonathan Dodd
11072 Philippa Foulds
10044 Ana Foz
10088 Kody Hedder
11136 Christof Heistermann
11137 Philip Hill
11144 Adrian Jacklin
11038 Paul Keeley
11275 Barnaby King
9538 Maria Kneafsey
11193 Megan Lowrie
11143 Callee Mellen
11274 Judyta Mlynarska
11195 Erik Moreno Perez

5205 Jeff Morris
11071 Tiberiu-Gabriel Nica
11084 Sacha O'Connor
11133 Anna Rojek
9314 Yago Terroba Souto
11256 Ioannis Thanos
11192 Steve Tomlinson
8848 Jessica Waterworth
11191 Natalie Wood

### Affiliate

11062 Natalie Aldrich
10805 Dominic Allen
5573 David Applegate
11092 Adrian Blake
11179 Frederick Blakey-Lodge
11264 Joseph Brooks