



# *The Archaeological Journal*

## **Book Reviews**



**BECOMING AN ARCHAEOLOGIST: A GUIDE TO PROFESSIONAL PATHWAYS.** By Joe Flatman. Pp. xiii and 233, Illus 33. Cambridge University Press, 2011. Price: £16.99. ISBN 978 0 521734 69 1.

This handbook represents a comprehensive guide to the career paths of archaeology and its related disciplines, and a useful volume for anyone considering a profession in the heritage sector. Written in an accessible style and clearly presented throughout, Joe Flatman's book fills a significant void by providing a pragmatic assessment of archaeology as a vocation. By the author's own admission, the handbook is primarily aimed at students, but it will also prove helpful for potential undergraduates who now more than ever are evaluating the financial implications of employment in the heritage industry.

The opening chapter provides an introduction to archaeology as a discipline, its relevance to contemporary society and the main appeals of studying or working in heritage services. Significantly, discussion is not restricted to the British or even European job market, but also evaluates the sector in North America and Australia, noting the ethical and political complexities of researching the heritage of indigenous communities. The breadth of opportunities available to professionals is thus established early on in the text, with Flatman emphasizing the variety of transferable skills and experiences that an archaeologist can develop. The changing landscape of the archaeological job market is outlined, and the way in which employers are now placing increasing value on qualifications, often above field experience, is highlighted.

Skills and training are discussed in more detail in the second chapter, which provides guidance on the options available at each key stage of the education system. The career pathways and opportunities opened up by gaining particular qualifications are outlined. The remainder of the handbook is largely devoted to describing these areas of employment in greater detail, beginning with cultural resource management, more commonly known as commercial archaeology. The author rightly emphasizes the typical lack of career structure in the commercial sector, and the mixture of tenacity and luck that is often required to progress. Whilst some may view such an analysis as pessimistic, Flatman's presentation of development-led projects is a realistic picture of a changeable and often unreliable working environment.

Five of the eight chapters are dedicated to particular professional sectors, and they include description, analysis and practical advice. 'A Day in the Life' and 'Lifestyle' sections of each of these chapters provide a welcome insight of what working professionals encounter on a regular basis. This is supplemented by brief interviews with

professional archaeologists, adding a personal touch to text that is otherwise largely orientated to providing the vital statistics of each profession. Following a chapter on employment in academic archaeology (Chapter 4), discussion shifts to the opportunities available within local and central government institutions. Development control and Historic Environment Records are given adequate coverage, yielding insights on statutory heritage protection and the way in which archaeology is treated during the planning process: an area that can seem impenetrable to the uninitiated, and especially so for recent graduates.

The final thematic chapter deals with public and community archaeology — one of the few sectors that has continued to grow in the recent economic climate. In addition to archaeology on television, the chapter covers career paths in museums and archaeological outreach organizations. Here, Flatman rightly asserts that all archaeologists should be public archaeologists. Indeed, community involvement is an increasingly integral part of academic research applications, and developers too are recognizing the mutual benefits of public engagement. The handbook is concluded with the top-ten tips for a budding archaeologist, but the supplied appendices are probably of more practical use. In addition to a list of useful websites and a glossary, the appendices include advice on how to equip oneself on an archaeological project.

Well presented and nicely interspersed with illustrations and explanatory tables, the frequent and logical subdivision of chapters ideally suits the handbook's aim as an easily accessible reference volume. Flatman's clear and informal style is a notable plus, especially when discussing complex areas such as planning and mitigation. As such, *Becoming an Archaeologist* is an extremely useful text. Perhaps above all, the volume emphasizes well the rewards that a career in archaeology provides, and the variety and depth of exciting avenues available to professionals and enthusiasts alike.

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