

## **“Britain has had enough of experts”**

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The complex cultural and social concept of expertise is central to the assignment of intellectual authority to an organisation or person. The social sciences are awash with literature which examine what exactly constitutes expertise, and definitions may encompass formal education; monopolies over esoteric skills; being ‘right’; familiarity with an obscure body of knowledge; understanding complex processes; superior judgment and decision-making – although not necessarily paid employment in exchange for expert knowledge. The concept of expert authority is ineradicably linked to the development of the process of professionalisation within occupations, which has been analysed systematically within the sociological literature since the 1930s.

Within archaeology, there is a long record of active amateur involvement in knowledge production, and scholarship, and the outputs of these have always been included in archaeological practice. Indeed, work by amateur antiquarians and archaeological societies during the 19th and early 20th centuries have been central to the foundations of the discipline itself.

There are difficult social and institutional challenges contained in how ‘expert-amateur’ discourse is constructed and legitimised: the concept of expertise is also pervasively Eurocentric, racist and colonial. The challenges of understanding the role of the expert are also inextricably linked to neoliberal economic policies, funding cuts, the marketisation of higher education and, ultimately, capitalism. This session seeks to understand how archaeological expertise has been created, maintained and embedded, and what kinds of boundary work takes place to stabilise the core characteristics of a professional expert, and a sense of entitlement to archaeological knowledge.

**Keywords:** authority; expertise; gatekeeping; knowledge creation; professionalisation

### **Papers**

#### **Understanding the Iron Age. Public Perceptions, Educational Engagement, and ‘Expert’ Interpretation at Open-Air Heritage Venues in Britain**

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In 2013, ‘Prehistory’ was added to the English National Curriculum, prompting relevant heritage-based visitor centres to provide tailored educational offerings alongside their broader role informing and inspiring the general public. Similar elements of the Scottish and Welsh curricula have also created a market for school visits with opportunities for hands-on experiences and engagements with the Iron Age. Using observations from ethnographic fieldwork at venues seeking to reconstruct Iron Age life, we explore the development, content, and presentation of the ‘expert’ messages created, and the motivations and values of the heritage communities who deliver them, as well as the expectations and responses of visitors. Although these venues were founded on archaeological evidence, how relevant are archaeological expertise, authenticity, and authority where the primary aim is to attract, engage, and enthuse? What new expert practices have emerged?

### **“If you can’t blind them with science.....” Misquote from W. C. Fields**

David Paul Taylor (Bradford University, [D.Taylor4@bradford.ac.uk](mailto:D.Taylor4@bradford.ac.uk))

Archaeology is a discipline of dichotomous relationships and perceived frontiers. This elevation of artificial barriers is to the detriment of a shared and mutual understanding of what defines the discipline.

As professional chartered status is sought now is the time for theoretical archaeologists (another form of segregation?) to peer above the parapet and initiate an inclusive debate. One not centred upon public authorities and expert academics, but open to all. Within our HEIs an elusive boundary has developed since the time of the antiquarians. Scientists may seek to baffle, and theoreticians can blind - yet neither really contribute to the debate. Students remain excluded from the establishment and only rarely invited to collaborate. The discipline remains consumed by divisions and “TAGS”, splitters and lumpers, when a new inclusive ideology is required. The paradox? I am here. I am a student.

### **Expertise in a Digital Age**

*Lorna-Jane Richardson (UEA, [lorna.richardson@uea.ac.uk](mailto:lorna.richardson@uea.ac.uk))*

Is traditional expertise obsolete in the era of local knowledge, community archaeology, co-production, public engagement and participatory digital technologies? Have we conflated the ability to perform highly skilled tasks and acts of knowledge related to the archaeological process with the ability of the non-professional to embody, challenge or attain archaeological expertise and authority? And more importantly, can the economic value of archaeological expertise survive further austerity cuts in the face of Brexit?

### **Expertise is Not a Thing you Have, it’s a Thing you Do**

*James Dixon (Wood Plc, [james.dixon@woodplc.com](mailto:james.dixon@woodplc.com))*

No one should rely simply on qualifications, affiliation, reputation or status to be considered an expert. Because expertise is not a thing you have, it’s a thing you do. Expertise is always developed from nothing and it has to be constantly moulded, revised, reformed, nurtured, expanded, contracted, critiqued and celebrated. Most importantly, it has to be applied, and in a manner that does good, because your expertise is not a relationship between you and knowledge that others must recognise and celebrate, but between your knowledge and the chaos of the world in motion, where it exists in what you do with it.

### **Bridging the Gap: Using Academic Backgrounds in Prehistory to Inform and Consult on Planning Process in the Field**

*Sam Griffiths (AOC Archaeology, [sam.griffiths415@gmail.com](mailto:sam.griffiths415@gmail.com))*

Developer funded archaeology has a chronic history of the under-investigation of prehistory. However, in the recent past there has begun to be an acknowledgement of this lack of recognition and local authorities are beginning to assess the significance of early prehistory more rigorously. As part of this the mass of geotechnical data drawn from engineering projects in pre-planning is only now beginning to be exploited via archaeology on a major scale to bridge this gap. As an archaeological consultant my knowledge base developed through ten years studying prehistory has

been used and tested. This is not a knowledge base you would expect to thrive in such a sector, certainly not on the scale evident by the current work load. From personal experience bridging the gap between planning and mitigation for local planning authorities is not just a case of applying this hard-earned expertise, but also a case of constantly adapting them to fit the situation. This paper is the first step in generating a wider recognition of the use of archaeological expertise in the planning sector i.e. where commercial archaeology bridges the gap between academic knowledge and government/developer needs.

### **When Archaeological Expertise is Not Enough: Finding (and Losing) Vision in the Gaps between Disciplines**

*Anthony Masinton (University of York, [anthony.masinton@york.ac.uk](mailto:anthony.masinton@york.ac.uk))*

Archaeology is intellectually omnivorous. But what happens when archaeological expertise attempts to collaborate with expertise in disciplines with more refined, and exclusive, ideas about the value of their own ‘expert’ opinions? This digital paper will provide a case study of the collision of two disciplines and how their separate traditions concerning the value and use of ‘expert’ opinion affected the outcomes of a project, which was, in part, about making a site more accessible. It will also offer a hopeful vision of how similar situations might be creatively addressed in the future.

### **Critical Heritage Theory: Too Critical, Too Theoretical?**

*Alison Edwards (University of York, [ade506@york.ac.uk](mailto:ade506@york.ac.uk))*

Ideas of academic expertise, specifically critical heritage theory, are examined in relation to the experience of practitioners within the heritage sector of England and Wales. The talk raises questions including: who is excluded from academic discourse; are academic critiques applicable in practical contexts; and how can we create mechanisms which allow practitioners to access academic critiques of their work and voice their own responses? It is suggested that a new method of communicating is required to allow theoretical critiques to make the impact desired by their creators.

### **Archaeological Expertise in Non-Archaeological Industries**

*Camilla Moore (University of Southampton, [C.I.C.Moore@soton.ac.uk](mailto:C.I.C.Moore@soton.ac.uk))*

For many reasons it is common to find ex-commercial and/or degree educated archaeologists working in interdisciplinary areas or in non archaeological industries, in roles that draw on their archaeological expertise. While often considered archaeological experts by their employers and work peers, if you were to ask them if they consider themselves to be archaeologists the likely answer would be no. Equally, if you were to ask commercial or academic archaeologists whether they would consider those working in non-archaeological fields to be archaeological experts it is likely that they would also respond in the negative regardless of that persons background and knowledge base. Through a number of brief case studies (including my own maritime industry experience), I shall argue that a person’s archaeological expertise and access to the archaeological discourse should not be defined by job titles and I aim to question our current commercialised understanding of expertise.

### **Commercial Archaeology but not an Archaeologist**

*Catriona Cooper (University of York, [catriona.cooper@york.ac.uk](mailto:catriona.cooper@york.ac.uk))*

For eighteen months, I worked as a heritage consultant and buildings archaeologist for an archaeological unit. My credentials were applied to all outputs and at a high level my expertise was valued. However, there was also a sense of “othering” from field

staff. Being office base and with no formal background in “the field” I sat outside the norm of a supervisor. I was not an archaeologist. This friction between field and office staff aligns with issues of interaction between academic and commercial archaeologist and is realised as the difference between formal qualification vs a development of craft in the field. This presentation will discuss this valuing of different types of archaeological expertise and how this has been directed by the capitalisation of the sector and resulting male-dominated workforce.

### **1.4m people can't be wrong**

*Lara Band (MOLA, lband@mola.org.uk)*

CITiZAN, the Coastal and Intertidal Zone Archaeological Network, is an award winning England wide community archaeology project working with volunteers to record and monitor archaeological sites and features at risk from coastal erosion. The 2015-2018 phase of the project suggested that, rather than having had enough experts many people welcome, enjoy, desire and profit from contact with them. This short paper will explore the final figures and feedback for CITiZAN 2015-2016 as well as questioning just who the experts are.