STUDYING ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE UK

There are plenty of opportunities to study archaeology although the range of qualifications is relatively small. To get further information on any of them either contact your local institution or the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) Education service.

• http://www.britarch.ac.uk/educate/ed1.html

Introductory courses

Short courses are offered by Colleges of Further Education (FE) and the Workers Educational Association (WEA). Typically these will be 2 hours a week for ten weeks and are generally aimed at adults. Increasingly, colleges will offer an Open College Network (OCN) certificate for these courses. Sadly, major cuts in funding for adult education by the current government mean that these courses are rapidly disappearing. There are a few Access to Higher Education courses which cover some archaeology and there are also a number of archaeology Foundation Degrees including those linking forensic disciplines together.

• http://develop.ucas.com/FDCourseSearch/Gateway.html

Day schools or conferences are offered by university departments, FE colleges, local and national archaeological organisations and museums. Many of these involve lectures at university level although some are practically based. The two key sources on these are Current Archaeology (CA) and British Archaeology (BA) magazines.

Field schools, or training digs, are offered by universities and some local organisations in the summer. Details are advertised in CA and BA magazines. GCSE Archaeology was withdrawn a few years ago. However the new vocational GCSE in History contains significant archaeology options (up to 50 per cent) and offers the chance to undertake a basic fieldwork study and to compare historical and archaeological evidence in a study of ‘Dark Age Britain’. Some of the BTEC Nationals including Travel and Tourism and Countryside Management include units where archaeology can be used for case studies.

AS and A Level Archaeology

These are offered by AQA. The AS can be taken separately or as the first stage of an A Level. Each award is broken down into two modules. Three of these modules are examinations which each last between 75 and 120 minutes.
AS Level (first half of A Level)

Unit 1: The Archaeology of Religion and Ritual

One from:
- Prehistoric Europe – 30,000 BC to AD 43
- Ancient Egypt – 3,000 BC to 50 BC
- Roman Europe – 753 BC to AD 410

Unit 2: Archaeological Skills and Methods

Unit 2 requires you to analyse sources from a real archaeological site and answer a mini-essay on methods chosen from a short list. Unit 1 focuses on definitions and case studies and includes a longer piece of writing.

A2 (second half of A Level)

Unit 3: World Archaeology

A thematic approach covering settlement, economy, society and current issues in archaeology. It is assessed using essays.

Unit 4: Archaeological Investigation

A personal piece of fieldwork.

AS and A Level are offered in some FE colleges and schools. To find your nearest centre, contact the AQA or CBA. There are also some archaeology options in the Classical Civilisation A Level offered by OCR.

DEGREE LEVEL STUDY

Degrees usually involve study at university, although some courses have also been franchised to FE colleges. These may have a more practical or vocational focus than courses in universities.

At degree level there is considerable variety. You can study archaeology as a BA or a BSc, or in Scotland for four years for an MA. Detailed information can be obtained from the CBA or UCAS. Archaeology can be studied on its own, in combination or as part of other subjects. The information here largely applies to where it can be studied as a single subject. All courses will include elements on the development of archaeology, its methods and techniques, as well as the theory used to make sense of archaeological evidence. Beyond that they will vary considerably in their choice of topics.

Figure 14.1 Although it is sometimes difficult to arrange, you should try to get some practical experience of archaeology prior to applying or going to university.
In considering university courses you may want to give thought to the following:

- Is the course thematic or period based?
- Which periods can I study?
- Does the assessment pattern suit me? Is it continuous assessment or final exam based?
- What is the department strong in (e.g. science at Bradford, prehistory at Sheffield)?
- Does it have a practical or heritage element (for example Bournemouth)?
- What kinds of placements and excavation opportunities are on offer?
- How is it rated?
- Will I get the qualifications to get in?
- Do I need previous experience?

**Market forces**

Some courses have more applicants than others. They normally deal with this by asking higher grades from prospective students. If you are a standard A level student you simply have to get the grades. If you have a different educational background you should contact the department directly for advice before applying. Many are particularly keen on mature students, even if you haven’t got A levels.

**League tables**

Universities are ranked on research and teaching. A good research record may tell you that the university has published good research or that it has a lot of researchers. You may not actually be taught by the key researchers. There also appears to be a bias towards larger departments in the way the tables are calculated. Bournemouth University in particular seems to have suffered in this respect despite producing important national research such as the MARS report. Teaching tables may reflect the quality of lecturing. One has to be a little careful interpreting these. Unlike A Level there is no systematic comparison of the quality of degrees from different universities. A 2:1 from one institution may or may not be as good as a 2:1 from another.

The website includes recent information on A Level points asked for. It also lists some of the specialisms on offer. With over 100 different possibilities for joint or part honours courses in archaeology, there are many other opportunities to study archaeology in other university departments. Examples include Maritime Studies at St Andrews or Wetland Archaeology at Hull.

**STEPPING UP TO DEGREE LEVEL**

If you have studied A Level Archaeology, you may find that there is not much of an initial step up. You may even find that you have less to do at first. As with most subjects there is considerable overlap between A Levels and many first year undergraduate programmes. In considering your choice of programme it may be a good idea to select different topics or periods from those you did at A Level to broaden your knowledge and maintain your interest. If your chosen course has a practical scientific or statistical element you may find this new. You will generally get some support at the university, but it might be worth refreshing your memory before you go.

University lecturers and undergraduates have identified the following areas as different from A Level or where students sometimes struggle:
FINDING THE BEST INFORMATION

There are so many excellent sites, museums and written and electronic resources available to archaeology students that we can only list a fraction of those available. A much more detailed list linked to the topics in this book is available on the companion website. Since selection is subjective we have included those resources that we have found most useful and which our students have made most use of. Although we have tried to provide a good range, our choice is clearly biased towards our own interests. Another person’s list would undoubtedly look very different. Other sources, which provide additional depth on topics contained in the text, are listed in the bibliography.

TWENTY VERY USEFUL BOOKS

The focus is largely on Britain and Europe and full details of each text are in the bibliography. Make sure your school or college buys a copy of these books.

General texts

■ Fagan, B. (2000a) In the Beginning. A detailed introduction to archaeology from an American perspective.
■ Renfrew, C. and Bahn, P. (2004) Archaeology: Theories, methods and practice. This has become the encyclopedia of cases studies for a generation of archaeology students.

Archaeological sources and methods

■ Wilkinson, K. and Stevens, C. (2001) Environmental Archaeology. At last, a clear introduction to the archaeology of economics and ecosystems.

Period studies


Archaeological themes

■ Binford, L. (1983) In Pursuit of the Past. The introduction to understanding the formation of the archaeological record.
which looks at how patterns in the archaeological record can be used to reveal the social and ritual nature of past societies.


ARCHAEOLOGY BOOKSELLERS

There are often only limited ranges of archaeological texts in general bookshops. If you know what you want but can’t get it, try these two specialist companies:

- Castle Books: http://dspace.dial.pipex.com/town/square/fe63/
- Oxbow Books: http://www.oxbowbooks.com/

JOURNALS

In most subjects you would be unlikely to look at journals before university level. However, in archaeology it should be different. The first in this list are all very accessible and are often beautifully illustrated. The remainder are useful sources of case studies. Many good case studies only appear in journals.

British Archaeology (BA) http://www.britarch.ac.uk
Current Archaeology (CA) http://www.archaeology.co.uk/
Scientific American: http://www.amsci.org/amsci/amsci.html
Antiquity: http://antiquity.ac.uk
Assemblage: http://www.shef.ac.uk/~assem/
The Prehistoric Society: http://www.ucl.ac.uk/prehistoric/

GATEWAY WEBSITES

We have listed websites throughout the book where they provide more information on methods and case studies. To find other information you should head for one of the many archaeology gateway sites. Each of these will provide you with a huge number of links. You should be able to find something on almost everything you are looking for. We usually do.

These are a selection of the very best:

World Archaeology:
http://archaeology.about.com/
http://archnet.asu.edu/
http://odur.let.rug.nl/arge/
http://www.discoveringarchaeology.com/
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/archaeology/

Archaeology of the British Isles
http://www.britarch.ac.uk/info/uklinks.html
http://www.discoveryprogramme.ie/
http://www.cadw.wales.gov.uk/
http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/
http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/
http://www.spoilheap.co.uk/

Our current favourite is the anthropology site of Mesa Community College, Arizona which has great world archaeology case studies including short ethnographic and archaeological film clips.

http://www.mc.maricopa.edu/dept/d10/asb/

If you want more, why not go online to the Archaeology Coursebook site www.routledge.com/textbooks/9780415462860. Unlike many of the sites listed, its focus will be on good case studies at the right level for seminars and essays.

PLACES TO VISIT

We have tried to ensure some regional coverage with our suggestions although there is inevitably
a bias towards those which we have used and found useful.

**Twenty museums to visit**

There are two good websites which list many of Britain’s museums:

- [http://www.mda.org.uk/vlmp/](http://www.mda.org.uk/vlmp/)
- [http://www.museums.co.uk/](http://www.museums.co.uk/)

1. Ashmolean Museum, Oxford
2. British Museum, London:
3. Devizes Museum (Neolithic-Bronze Age)
4. Ipswich Museum (Anglo-Saxon)
5. Keiller Museum, Avebury (Neolithic-Bronze Age)
6. Museum of the Iron Age (Danebury), Andover
7. Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology, Cambridge
8. Museum of London
9. Museum of Wales, Cardiff:
11. Newcastle University Museum (Roman)
12. Petrie Museum, London (Egypt)
13. Pitt Rivers Museum, Oxford (anthropology)
14. Salisbury Museum (Neolithic-Bronze Age)
15. Jewry Wall, Leicester
16. Lincoln Museum
17. Corinium, Cirencester (Romans and Saxon)
18. St Albans (Roman)
19. Manchester (Egyptian)
20. Tullie House, Carlisle (Roman)

**Recreations and experimental sites**

- Butser Ancient Farm, nr Petersfield
- Peat Moors Visitor Centre, nr Glastonbury
- West Stow Anglo-Saxon village, nr Bury St Edmunds
- Flag Fen, Peterborough
- Jorvik Centre, York
- St Fagins, Newport
- Bede’s World, Jarrow
- Ironbridge Gorge, Telford

**Visits to archaeological monuments**

Where possible, several are grouped together to make a useful day out.

- Avebury–Keiller Museum–West Kennet–Windmill Hill
- Stonehenge–Durrington–Winterbourne Stoke
- Arbor Low–Stanton Moor–Creswell Crags
- Grimes Graves – West Stow–Thetford Castle
- Hadrian’s Wall–Vindolanda–Housesteads
- Chedworth–Corinium Museum–Great Witcombe
- Fishbourne Palace–Butser–Mary Rose
- Maes Howe–Ring of Brodgar–Stones of Stenness
- Maiden Castle–Dorchester Museum–Cerne Abbas Giant
- Wharram Percy–Fountains Abbey–Rievaulx