

ArchaeologistsEngage 

Annual Report 2015/16

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Issue 1

ArchaeologistsEngage

ANNUAL REPORT

Editor
Belinda Tibbetts

International Committee Members of Archaeologists Engage

Tine Schenck Emily Wapshott Belinda Tibbetts

www.archaeologists-engage.org

Introduction

Welcome to the 2015/16 Annual Report of ArchaeologistsEngage (AE), the first for our organisation. This report provides a detailed overview of the start-up and first operational year of AE. As we are a new organisation there is limited information to currently report on and this report is presented as a narrative of our first 15 months of activity.

Organisation Information

ArchaeologistsEngage is an independent non-profit group of archaeologists who came together to enable engagement between professionals and the public. The aim of the organisation is to promote improved communication between archaeology professionals and their wider public. ArchaeologistsEngage aims to have an international reach.

ArchaeologistsEngage is registered with the Norwegian Registry for Voluntary Organisations. Organisation Number: 915 964 958. There is currently no financial aspect to the organisation.

The Structure

The organisation was founded by Tine Schenck, Emily Wapshott, and Belinda Tibbetts.

The organisational structure consists of a Board, International Committee, and a General Assembly.

The Board oversees the operational administration and the accounting of the organisation.

The International Committee for the 2015/16 period consisted of the three founding members. The International Committee oversees the daily operational processes of the organisation.

The General Assembly is responsible for proposals or changes to the actions and strategy of the organisation, and in the future, the biannual election of officers.

International groups will operate on a local scale under the regulations of

ArchaeologistsEngage and will be autonomous with regard to the activities undertaken and group-specific administration.

The Mission

ArchaeologistsEngage aspires to encourage archaeologists world-wide to acknowledge our professional responsibility to address the imbalance between our professional knowledge and the information that reaches the public.

History

ArchaeologistsEngage was founded on 6th September, 2015. The motivation was centred on encouraging archaeologists to consider their public audience and to actively engage with this audience. Public engagement has often acquired a negative association amongst professional archaeologists, and is too often viewed as an aspect of professional conduct that is performed under duress. This has a significant impact on the public perception of archaeology and archaeologists. Reduced public engagement by archaeology professionals has also limited the amount and quality of information available to the public.

ArchaeologistsEngage intends to change this situation by encouraging and supporting an increase in outreach activities by archaeologists, within a non-hierarchical framework.

We started by establishing a website and launching a petition to archaeologists to undertake a form of public engagement in 2016 that was separate from their professional requirements. The intention was to encourage archaeologists to consider how their work was shared with the public and to initiate a new form of public engagement.

We then started an extensive social media presence to create awareness of our organisation within the discourse of public engagement and heritage. The beginning of 2016 was devoted to this purpose. We also launched two blogs (Ivory Tower and House Archaeologist) that were directed to different audiences. The Ivory Tower targets archaeology professionals and features inspiring examples of public engagement, while the House Archaeologist provides a platform for archaeology professionals to communicate their work directly to the public.

From the beginning we have been supported by EXARC (International) and SouthWest Archaeology (UK). Shortly after founding ArchaeologistsEngage, we were invited to the Norwegian Archaeology Meeting (NAM) in November 2015, and also to contribute written pieces to EXARC and Heritage Portal (Europe). We were also contacted by HeritageDaily to contribute to their publication.

In the fourth quarter of 2015 ArchaeologistsEngage provided support for a public engagement event in heritage archaeology in Calcutta, India in conjunction with Heritage Walk Calcutta.



In June 2016 we decided to work with a milestone structure to progress the organisation objectives and build awareness within the archaeological community. We intend to set a milestone for every quarter.

First milestone

We submitted a poster to the 2016 European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) conference in September and sent a delegation to represent the organisation. The conference included discussions on archaeological heritage and the social role of archaeology, and our delegates were able to attend multiple sessions on themes relevant to public engagement. Because of this focus, the EAA conference was big success for ArchaeologistsEngage and we received plenty of positive feedback and interest from attendees. We gained significant insight into the public archaeology discourse and how we,

as an organisation, can initiate positive change. A full review of ArchaeologistsEngage's experience at the EAA is provided at the end of this report.

Second milestone

The next milestone for 2016 was to start rolling out membership to ArchaeologistsEngage. A pilot meeting was held in Oslo to consider the needs that could be met by a local AE group.



Membership will provide a voice within AE (voting as part of the General Assembly). ArchaeologistsEngage will provide support in various forms including a platform for engagement groups, conferences and events, representative affiliation, newsletters and online profile links. The intention is to have local groups develop autonomy to the point where they can assume control over the responsibility for their group. Each group would eventually generate their own local newsletter.

ArchaeologistsEngage is looking to expand its reach globally with local groups in 2017. This will further increase our outlook and encourage growth in public engagement.

Review of 2016 EAA Conference in Vilnius

Tine Schenck and Emily Wapshott attended the 22nd annual meeting of the European Archaeological Association (EAA) in Vilnius Lithuania in September 2016, on behalf of ArchaeologistsEngage. The meeting was based at Vilnius University, founded in 1579, one of the oldest universities in Central Europe.

Our aim for attending was to immerse ourselves in the current dialogue on community archaeology, public engagement and the accessibility of cultural heritage, to network with our colleagues across Europe and to promote our principles in conversation and debate, establishing an academic presence for our organisation. ArchaeologistsEngage also presented a poster, summarising our principles and aims, within the session; *"Open Access and Open Data in Archaeology: Following the Ariadne Thread."*

The conference had six main themes: interpreting the archaeological record, managing archaeological heritage, theoretical and methodological perspectives, science and multidisciplinary, archaeology without borders and archaeology of the Baltic region. There was a strong focus across these themes of engaging within and across communities,

debating the place archaeology holds in interpreting the wider heritage sector for the public, as well as the politicisation of cultural heritage and rise in nationalism. There was also an emergency symposium on the effects of Brexit on the Europe-wide community.

The conference was well attended by a diverse group of colleagues, with a strong showing of Eastern and South-Eastern European members, bringing a markedly different focus and a fascinating insight into the challenges faced in countries such as Turkey, Russia, Ukraine and Romania, which may have political, cultural or financial conditions that apply different pressures on both archaeologists and the local communities with which they are interacting.

Tine and Emily were actively involved in several debates during the sessions and we made sure to be active on Twitter with news and views from the conference; we subsequently attracted more followers and there was an overall positive response to ArchaeologistsEngage, from those we communicated with. Of particular interest to ArchaeologistsEngage were the sessions on digital initiatives in open public archaeology, which engendered some lively debate in the room over the value of social media and the changes in information exchange; as well as the Open data session in which we participated and the discussion on the European Environmental Impact Directives which bring archaeologists into direct contact with farmers, housing developers, infrastructure constructors etc. and the various challenges differing countries face in applying planning legislation. Several papers presented by colleagues from Denmark, the Netherlands and Finland showed that those regions seem to be leading examples in Europe at present, in engagement between communities, developers, government and cultural institutions. Private networking undertaken by Emily and Tine led to the promise of some blog contributions by various academics for the ArchaeologistsEngage website and we hope to follow up on some of these contacts for future involvement.

It soon became clear that *public engagement with heritage* is the zeitgeist of archaeology in our time and that the archaeological community are 'waking up' to our responsibilities.



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Archaeologists Engage

Thinking Big – We Can Change Archaeology

Identity

Archaeologists Engage promotes communication between archaeology professionals and the public. We offer a platform for archaeologists who wish to engage with the public.

AE is a project without borders, promoting direct connections across the world between archaeologists and their audience.



Catalhöyük School Dig Day (Turkey)



Exeter University Community Day (UK)



Experimental Iron Smelting



Sasketh Workshop

Call to Action

We encourage archaeologists to undertake public engagement activities.

Connect with your public audience through:

- Blog posts
- Pictures on social media
- Public talks
- Guided walks or site visits
- Community projects

You can answer the AE Call to Action at www.archaeologists-engage.org/challenge

Action & Reflection

Archaeologists Engage supports community engagement. We provide inspiration and advice for archaeologists wanting to connect with the public directly.

International contributions to our professional blog (Ivory Tower) cover all aspects of archaeology. The Ivory Tower allows archaeologists to share and reflect on their experiences in public engagement.



Basque Heritage Public Audience (Spain)

Outreach



Kolkata Historical Archaeology Tour (India)

Contact between archaeologists and the public. Increased awareness about our profession. Sharing our knowledge and the impacts of our discoveries with the public engages them with our world and gives them direct access to archaeology.

Archaeologists Engage is enabling the public to connect with the complex and layered evidence in the archaeological record through our public blog (House Archaeologist).

www.archaeologists-engage.org

Thel@archaeologists-engage.org Emily@archaeologists-engage.org Selinda@archaeologists-engage.org