Becoming an Archaeologist

Becoming an Archaeologist: A Guide to Professional Pathways is an engaging handbook on career paths in the area of archaeology. It outlines in straightforward fashion the entire process of getting a job in archaeology, including the various career options; the training required; and how to get positions in the academic, commercial, and government worlds. It also includes a discussion of careers in related heritage professions, such as museums and conservation societies. The book includes a series of interviews with real archaeologists, all young professionals who began their careers within the past ten years. These insider guides offer essential tips on how they got their first jobs and progressed in their careers. Written in an accessible style, the book is essential reading for anyone interested in the realities of archaeology in the twenty-first century.

Joe Flatman is the County Archaeologist of Surrey in southeast England and a senior lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology, University College London. He has published widely on issues of archaeological practice, ethics, and law in archaeology. His most recent books include Ships and Shipping in Medieval Manuscripts and Archaeology in Society: Its Relevance in the Modern World (coedited with Marcy Rockman).
To my parents, Frances and Martin Flatman

With my love and thanks for providing a unique grounding in the pleasures and perils of professional life

“Not all Greeks were Spartans”
Becoming an Archaeologist

A Guide to Professional Pathways

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Preface and Acknowledgments

I wrote this book primarily to help prospective archaeologists (in particular, archaeology students) better plan their futures. However, this book is also borne of my frustration at the widespread misunderstanding of the practice of archaeology and lifestyle of archaeologists in the modern world. As a consequence, although I have tried to paint a balanced portrait of archaeology throughout the book, this is, inevitably and unashamedly, partly a personal perspective – one to which some readers may take exception. I make no apologies for that. One thing that I would emphasize in particular, however, is that although this book is about “professional” archaeology, it is absolutely not a call for a solely paid archaeological sector in which all voluntary/amateur/avocational/community/independent involvement has been driven out of existence. As a long-standing member of the UK’s Council for British Archaeology (dating back to my teenage membership in the Young Archaeologists Club), and lately and very proudly serving on that organization’s board of trustees, I would emphasize my belief in the key place of the independent individual or group in archaeology, and that archaeology – and wider society – are big enough places to see both paid and unpaid archaeologists working to the highest professional standards. I do not believe that these two ways of doing archaeology are mutually exclusive, as some commentators suggest. Nor do I believe that the improved living and working standards so many archaeologists urgently deserve can only and inevitably come through the loss of the volunteer. As I highlight repeatedly throughout this book, I sincerely believe that the single best thing that anyone can do to get involved in archaeology is to join his or her local archaeological or historical society.

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