Kenneth Aitchison. Executive Director, Landward Research Ltd.

kenneth.aitchison@landward.eu

**On the outside looking in: what will Brexit mean for European archaeology?**

The UK’s government’s decision to withdraw from the European Union may dominate British politics for a generation.

But it is not the biggest issue in European politics:

EU leaders … are eager to stress that such problems as economic reforms, fixing the euro and sorting out the allocation of refugees as far more important than Brexit, which they largely see as an act of self-harm that the British are going to have to live with (The Economist, July 1st 2017).

And similarly, while it has been clear from the beginning that archaeologists believe Brexit will have serious consequences for British archaeology, it is unlikely have such an impact on European archaeology as a whole.

The UK will continue to be involved in European cultural heritage policy through the Council of Europe (CoE). The UK is not leaving the CoE, as it is distinct from the European Union, and so the UK’s ratification of the CoE’s conventions and its contribution to updating and developing new conventions will not be affected. The UK has had, and will continue to have, influence on cultural heritage policy in all the democracies of Europe, regardless of Brexit. And the disconnection of the UK from the single market for goods, people, services and capital within the EU will not profoundly affect the way that archaeology is done in Europe.

93% of UK archaeologists are graduates, placing the profession in a social group that typically voted against Brexit and that continues to be wary of its potential repercussions. Immediately following the June 2016 referendum, the Society of Antiquaries of London rapidly pulled together thoughts from Fellows of the Society (SAL 2016), and almost every contributor thought Brexit would have negative consequences for archaeology.

Six months later, a survey of archaeological specialists found that although there was “an undercurrent of negativity” about the way Brexit would affect their work and opportunities, the prevailing sense was that nothing will change (Aitchison 2017, 38).

While it is likely that UK archaeology – in common with many other areas of work and society, including the primary source of archaeological projects, the construction industry (Clack 2017) – will be affected negatively by the UK leaving the European Union, it will not disturb European archaeology nearly as badly. Who works in European archaeology now and in the future, how European archaeology is funded, and its traditions of practice will be minimally impacted.

*What won’t change…*

UK commercial archaeology has not successfully implanted elsewhere in the EU. While some UK archaeology companies work in Ireland, effectively there are now none carrying out archaeological fieldwork elsewhere in the EU. Although Oxford Archaeology won the first archaeological project ever to go to competitive tender in France in 1996 (Miles & Early 1998), opened two offices there and worked on the Canal Seine Nord Europe megaproject (Depaepe, Kerouanton, Prilaux & Talon 2016, 131), it continued to encounter opposition from local establishment organisations and individuals, leading to its withdrawal from working in France in 2012.

Archaeological practice in Northern Ireland is much more closely integrated with archaeological practice in the Republic of Ireland than it is with that in Great Britain, and so cross-border working became relatively established practice. But other than work in Northern Ireland, and the exceptional case of Rubicon Heritage, an Irish company with offices in England, Scotland and Wales (Rubicon Heritage 2017), there are no non-UK companies doing fieldwork in Great Britain (although some consultancies, such as AECOM and Arcadis, are large multinational organisations with corporate headquarters in other countries). Away from the island of Ireland, nothing will change with Brexit.

The regulations on environmental impact assessment, which guide much archaeological work across the European Union, stem from *European Directive EC 85/337* (EEC 1985) and were brought into UK law through the *Environmental Assessment Regulations* in 1988 and 1989. The existence of the environmental impact assessment (EIA) procedure, setting out a process of assessment, evaluation and mitigation, clearly influenced the thinking behind *PPG 16* (DoE 1990) and so has had a profound effect on archaeological practice in the UK. But many European Union countries operated EIA procedures in advance of *EC 85/337*, including France where these procedures had become compulsory in 1978 (Ralston & Thomas 1993, 1); the work on the UK land-side of the Channel Tunnel in the 1980s used French EIA rules prior to their adoption in England (Tim Darvill quoted in Aitchison 2012), and the rules won’t change with the UK’s departure – the UK simply will no longer have any input into the updates and changes to such regulations at the European level, but those regulations will continue in UK and other national laws. Meaning nothing will change with Brexit.

UK field practice has not significantly influenced European archaeological practice; traditions are remarkably insular or parochial in every country. Standard approaches in the UK, such as open-area excavation and single context-recording under the influence of the Museum of London’s *Archaeological Site Manual* (MoL 1994) have not significantly affected the way that archaeological fieldwork is undertaken outside the UK, nor have innovative practices such as those adopted by Framework Archaeology at Heathrow Terminal 5 (Andrews, Barrett & Lewis 2000). So nothing will change with Brexit.

Academically, no European archaeology departments carry out regular excavations or field schools in the UK, but UK universities will continue to be able to enjoy fieldwork in Europe after Brexit (see Bahn’s 1989 *Bluff Your Way in Archaeology* re: the importance of sunshine, wine, local lovers *etc* to university lecturers) – in the same way that they were doing before the introduction of the Maastricht Treaty in 1992. Meaning nothing will change with Brexit.

There are relatively few UK archaeologists working in other EU states. *Discovering the Archaeologists of Europe 2012-14* (Aitchison *et al* 2014, 34) identified that, in total, only 5% of archaeologists in employment across 21 European countries were from another EU state. It must be noted that there has been a recent increase in the number of UK academics taking up positions at universities elsewhere in the EU, but this represents a tiny fraction of the archaeological workforce (and these people will normally still be working and teaching in English-language environments in their new countries). So next to nothing will change with Brexit.

*The one big change*

However, there are many EU archaeologists working in the UK.

The *Archaeological Market Survey 2016-17* (Aitchison, forthcoming), a survey of the leading commercial practices in UK archaeology, found that on 1st April 2017, 17% of archaeologists working for the major commercial practices in the UK are European (EU) citizens, and a further 2% are from elsewhere in the world.

Transnational mobility within the EU has supported UK archaeology more than it has professional archaeology in other countries. Two key factors are responsible for this and have facilitated people moving to the UK (and Ireland) rather than *vice versa* – the commercial system in the UK allows more flexibility in employment than the models used in some other countries, and because working in archaeology needs local language skills; English is by far the most widely spoken second language in Europe (TNS Opinion & Social 2012, 5).

The big issue is the impact that Brexit will have on European archaeologists working in the UK and on their employers, at a time when demand for professional archaeological services is expected to increase (Aitchison, forthcoming). Whether the European archaeologists who are currently employed in the UK will still have the right to work is unknown, causing uncertainty and insecurity for them and for their employers.

*In conclusion*

While the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists and the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland scramble to protect the free movement of accredited archaeologists between the UK and Ireland (MacDonagh & Hinton 2017), and UK university archaeology departments anticipate losing access to funds administered by the European Commission, such as *Horizon 2020* (Technopolis 2017), European archaeological practice as a whole will carry on regardless.

The UK leaving the European Union could be a profoundly bad thing for British (and Irish) archaeology, most significantly by reducing access to and opportunities for a skilled workforce. But it will have minimal effect on European archaeology.

Brexit makes British archaeologists unhappy, and it makes archaeologists in Europe sorry – but they are sorry for our loss, not theirs

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