



**General Certificate of Education (A-level)
June 2012**

Archaeology

ARCH3

(Specification 2010)

ARCH3 World Archaeology

Report on the Examination

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Unit ARCH3

World Archaeology

General comments

Performance this year was broadly in line with last year although we saw an increase in higher quality answers, especially in section B. All questions were attempted by a good range of students. The most popular (in order) were 12, 1, 3, 7, 8 and 10 with far fewer attempting 9 and 11. In section A, question 8 followed by 3 and 7 were most frequently done well but the top band was reached in all questions for the first time. Questions 2, 5 and 9 produced the weakest answers on average. Performance on questions in section B was very consistent across the questions and on average, produced slightly stronger responses than the average for section A. Teachers have prepared students effectively for section B and we should view this new section as fairly well embedded now. Very few students showed signs of poor time management or infringed the rubric. Schools and colleges appear to have addressed this following some problems last year.

As in 2011 it appeared that some schools and colleges are teaching a limited number of prepared answers. Aside from the very weak, this does students a disservice since it severely limits their marks if the question is not exactly the one they have prepared – and it usually is not. Sometimes it is not even close. This is particularly sad to see where students are able and have strong subject knowledge. At A2 we test student's ability to discuss concepts and issues, construct an argument, deploy relevant information and reach judgements. The overwhelming majority of schools and colleges clearly prepare their students to do this. While we will over time revisit topics, questions are likely to vary in order that each cohort of students has a similar level of challenge. There are still some students who write detailed responses without any reference to archaeology. These are invariably based on Roman and occasionally Egyptian written accounts. Where students are also studying Classical Civilisation or Ancient History the need to answer archaeology questions with an emphasis on physical evidence needs to be made clear to them.

This year schools and colleges had responded to issues raised in last year's report and there were fewer instances of sites being invented and less restating of Hawke's 'ladder of inference'. The impressive range of sites covered by schools and colleges continues to grow with case studies from Japan and Australia featuring alongside increasing numbers of Palaeolithic sites. Medieval and post-medieval sites remain rare although the odd student did cite relevant examples from their personal studies from these periods. There was also evidence of students using understanding of relevant scientific techniques to support their arguments particularly on questions 13, 8 and 9. Overall, student performance was very encouraging.

Section A: Themes in World Archaeology

Theme 1: People and Society in the Past

This theme proved the most popular once again with theme 3 not too far behind. Theme 3 on average had the stronger responses but not by a great deal.

01 This proved a very popular question although most students focussed on burial assemblages rather than personal ornamentation. Some students chose to concentrate on human remains and other aspects of burial apart from assemblages and limited themselves in doing so. This was one of a number of questions where weaknesses in their

grasp of terminology did let some students down. On the whole, students' interpretation of social meaning was limited to status/ wealth and gender. It was relatively rare to see other aspects such as office, age, ethnicity or identity. Alongside the ubiquitous Amesbury Archer a number of studies were legitimately recycled from unit 1 including the Wetwang burials, Vedbaek and Hochdorf. Some students made good use of Shennan's study at Branc to discuss value in relation to status. Other fruitful case studies included Tiszapolgar (Chalcolithic Hungary - hints of age, gender and status), The Egved Girl (Bronze Age Denmark), Sungir (Russia - hints of ascribed status and kinship) as well as more familiar examples from Vix, Birdlip, Palenque and Sutton Hoo. One or two students attempted both parts of the question and got overstretched as a result.

- 02** This had a cross-over element but the focus (and the theme) was social. A number of students did not appear to know the difference between social and economic and lengthy accounts of the development of farming or hand-axes in themselves were not really relevant. More successful were accounts which linked social developments to metal working, farming or changing foraging strategies. Social change and the reasons for it have presented a challenge on several papers and it may be that schools and colleges need to focus on one or two examples where there are debates about why they happened. For example the emergence of larger scale societies (villages) in the Neolithic, ranked or hierarchical societies in the Bronze Age, Iron Age empires, gender divisions in the Neolithic or the emergence of Anglo-Saxon kingdoms. While the range of causes will vary, most will have elements that could be related to economic or technological change e.g. domestication of animals, food processing, mass production of metal weapons, military organisation etc.
- 03** This was popular with most students focussing on either individuals or groups. The reason we have either/or questions is to increase the range of choice for students. This is increasingly important with more schools and colleges studying the Palaeolithic as well as the large numbers who focus on the Iron Age onwards. Most responses were able to highlight the threat of force with Roman examples predominating. Some of these went into great detail about the army and forts but didn't always address the question. There were some excellent responses drawing on ancient Egypt including discussion of monumental architecture related to Rameses III at Medinet Habu and hieroglyphic 'labels' linking food storage to taxes paid by various settlements in UJ tomb at Abydos. Tutankhamun and Raedwald also provided useful examples of individuals.

Theme 2: Sites and People in the Landscape

- 04** This was not as popular as previous questions of this type have been. Most responses focused on Iron Age roundhouses with experimentation at Butser providing the most common case study. Howick, Skara Brae and Star Carr all featured in several essays but were not always known in sufficient depth to really address the question. Again there were some interesting Egyptian examples including Tel El Armana. Surprisingly the excellent work at West Stow in Suffolk (<http://www.weststow.org/>) or Lerje in Denmark (<http://www.sagnlandet.dk/Scientific-research.192.0.html>) rarely featured although there are very accessible websites for both.
- 05** This was the least popular question in this section. It mainly produced routine responses which focussed on CPT and Thiessen Polygons. The best responses were clearly linked to regional case studies, particularly Mayan and Mesopotamian cities. Poor understanding of terminology let some students down where they focused on intra-site spatial analysis.
- 06** This question was the most popular in this section. Although the average response was in line with other questions there were relatively few really strong answers on this. In part this

was because many students responded to the term boundaries and ignored territory. This may reflect a recycling of material from unit 1. At times (eg discussing Parker-Pearson's ideas about an area devoted to the ancestors around Stonehenge), this was argued well. However, answers which focussed on individual monuments, caves or buildings were usually not relevant. Amongst the better responses were some based around bog bodies from Ireland such as Old Croghan and Clonycavan or studies of territories of Wessex Hillforts.

Theme 3: Economics and Material Culture

- 07** This was frequently answered well with some very imaginative and wide ranging responses. Ethnographic evidence was often scanty but a very wide range of case studies from across world archaeology were quarried to provide archaeological examples including Ceren, Jarlshof, Star Carr, Head-Smashed-In, Mezhirich, Ur and Otzi the Iceman. Most concentrated on the use of animal bone, sinew or hides or animals in art. A few looked at traction (including depictions of riding from the Elgin Marbles) but secondary products such as milk, cheese, wool rarely featured. One of the most exciting research studies at the moment is the European Dairying Project which is involving Archaeologists and Biochemists from a range of universities in tracking the spread of dairying and by extension the impact it had on wealth, ownership, food supplies, specialisms, land use, consumption, ceramics and health. It is well worth checking out. Material is easily (and mainly) accessible on-line (<http://www.bris.ac.uk/nerclsmf/examples/archaeology.html> or <http://planetlactose.blogspot.co.uk/2008/08/dairying-more-than-8000-years-old.html>).
- 08** This produced even stronger answers on average with students showing a good grasp of both concepts and case studies. There were some prepared responses on storage which had some relevance but not as much as they could have had if the students had responded to the question rather than the one aspect they had been hoping for. There were some interesting and detailed accounts of the development of hunting in Northern Europe and on the shifts from foraging to cultivation in Mesoamerica. These worked best when they were firmly linked to the question and least well when they were lengthy narratives. Recent work on Barra and Colonsay in the Hebrides was used effectively in several responses as were Knossos and a number of Roman settlements such as Ostia (warehouses) and Arbeia (granaries).
- 09** This was a new type of question looking at topics which feature in many texts and many university courses but which we have not directly examined previously. Amongst the responses were discussion of the spread of LBK ceramics from Hungary to Western Europe, Beakers, Roman Pottery and copper metallurgy.

Section B: Contemporary Issues in World Archaeology

- 10** This question was interpreted by many students as being simply a re-run of the amateur versus professional debate. While there was some merit in this, arguments were frequently shallow with amateurs being assumed to be lacking in skills and understanding. Very few students seemed aware that amateurs might sometimes be trained archaeologists but not working as professionals. A sizeable minority equated amateurs with metal detectorists and simply rehashed arguments about the pros and cons of metal detecting. Many students had little awareness of the continuing, contribution of amateur-led projects.

The best responses included some outstanding essays, well informed and passionately argued. It was both refreshing albeit rather rare when one student wrote that, 'sites are very rarely destroyed by well-meaning but untrained amateurs but by criminals'. Some schools and colleges had clearly spent time on Valetta and its ramifications and this

resulted in some interesting discussion of prestige and professionalism and why licensing might be seen as a route to improved pay and conditions by some. Another student used the example of the amateur archaeologist Martin Green on Cranborne Chase who has excavated many monuments on his farm and is very widely respected for his research as well as his excellent museum. Many other amateur groups continue to publish and to undertake research. The Cornish Archaeological Society and the Sedgefield project were both identified as good examples. Current Archaeology is a good source of useful case studies.

- 11** This was intended to provide an opportunity to look at an aspect of archaeology in a broader context and to consider its value. It produced a number of sensible responses which looked at the competing demands on public finance and priorities and started to consider the worth of heritage in society. Weaker responses got little further than asserting that, 'developers damage sites so they should pay'. Examples are needed in order to flesh out arguments and to tease out finer points. Both British and Current Archaeology have featured good examples this year.
- 12** This question proved to be as popular as anticipated although many students did not pick up on all the aspects of the question. Many rehearsed arguments about repatriation or focussed on cases where religious or ethnic groups were not directly involved. The sub-theme on identity, ownership and community is the most predictable of the sub-themes in section B and questions will be set from different angles to ensure comparability. Students will need to think about the wording of the question in order to frame a relevant response. There were some excellent responses where students had clearly studied examples such as the Torres Strait Islanders. 'Charlie', the child burial which recently featured in a dispute with a Pagan group was the most commonly cited display example although there was considerable confusion about the museum involved (Alexander Keiller Museum at Avebury <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/avebury-alexander-keiller-museum/>). Kennewick man and a Jewish cemetery in York were the most frequently cited burials. However, the question was not simply about display of human remains and responses which just focussed on modern professional sensitivities about this issue or where relevant ethnic or religious groups were not involved, were rarely relevant. Equally, those which lost sight of the human remains angle and focussed on sites such as Seahenge were unsuccessful.
- 13** This was intended to allow students to draw from a wide range of potential case studies to engage with one of the central issues in the debate about evolution. This is exactly what happened with a wide range of responses and high levels of knowledge displayed by students. These included the Savannah debate and evidence of upright locomotion, Ice Age and Mesolithic tool kits and colonisation of lands beyond Eurasia. Having a question each year on Evolution appears to be encouraging schools and colleges to tackle the Palaeolithic in greater numbers.

Mark Ranges and Award of Grades

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