

# FIGHTING FOR SURVIVAL: PHD STUDENT EXPERIENCE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

July 28, 2017 Hanna Steyne Chamberlin Day of Archaeology 2017, Explore Posts, Historical Archaeology, Maritime Archaeology, Post Medieval, UK 19th century, Archaeology, Day of Archaeology, historical archaeology, London, maritime archaeology, PhD, river archaeology, Student, Thames Foreshore, United Kingdom, University of Manchester

This final Day of Archaeology finds me busy and distracted. I am roughly at the half way point in my part-time PhD at the University of Manchester, but as the department falls quiet with academic staff dispersing across the globe to introduce undergraduate and post-graduate students to archaeology as diverse as [Convict era Tasmania](#), [Neolithic Herefordshire](#) and the multi-period site of [Ardnamurchan, Scotland](#), senior managers at the University are busy trying to decimate the department by getting rid of 50% of the already small staff of 8.

The M2020 'vision' includes making 171 members of staff redundant, including a spectacular attack on the department of archaeology, which is due to suffer a disproportionate cut to staff numbers. If we are left with just 4 members of staff, the department is likely to merge with Classics, and unlikely to be able to continue running the single honours BA degree. The MA course has already been scrapped from 2018. With 15 PhD students currently enrolled, 4 members of staff are unlikely to be able to offer appropriate supervision, let alone provide the breadth of expertise expected, or needed.

The staff at Manchester have been [vocal in their opposition](#) not only of the plans, but also the way in which they have been implemented. In correspondence the M2020 project team have insisted that the changes will 'improve the student experience' yet it is difficult to see how slashing staff numbers will achieve this. The Archaeology department has an unparalleled reputation for positive student experience and at the moment is the only subject in the University to have 100% student satisfaction. It is also the only Archaeology department in the UK to achieve this figure. In recent years, our staff have won four University wide awards for teaching excellence, in the fields of Social Responsibility, Mental Health Champion, Best E-Learning Experience, and Best Communicator. From the perspective of the PhD students the proposed cuts will do nothing but irreversible harm to the department.

So on this day of archaeology I urge you to please sign our [petition](#) against the planned redundancies and have a look at the letters of support for University of Manchester staff and in opposition to the proposed staff cuts at <https://resiststructuringmcr.wordpress.com/>

In other news, my day has also involved the more normal activities of a PhD student. I've been reorganising my methodology chapter, written a bit of book review and been trawling through some 1891 Census records. I am looking for the people who lived close to the Chelsea Embankment shortly after its construction. I'm interested in the differences in the socio-economic make up of the community in the pre- and post-embankment periods, trying to work out how the Embankment construction and associated removal of working class housing and waterfront businesses affected them. I've been creating maps, based on historical maps and documents, to visualise where people lived and worked, looking for the places they may have moved around, between and within. The map below plots out residential buildings-coloured according to Booths Maps of London Poverty, blue = poor, red=well to do/comfortable, yellow=independently wealthy. In addition the multi-coloured blocks on Royal Hospital Road,

formerly Queens Road, indicate a variety of businesses and shops, whilst the coloured areas on the foreshore relate to archaeological remains I surveyed last year.



2017 OS map with 1891 residential buildings, businesses, parks identified. 19th century archaeological remains on the foreshore as surveyed by H. Steyne 2016.

Whilst I'm unable to make any conclusions yet, I'm encouraged by the diversity in the population close to the river front, and to the co-location of archaeological remains with former businesses on the waterfront. The impact of losing these sources of employment must have been enormous for this community.

So, whilst on the one hand I despair and worry about the future survival of my department, I am steadily plodding through data for my own research. All the while wondering whether I'll still be a Manchester University student this time next year. Let's hope so.

Please sign our [petition](#). Thank you.

You can find more about me [here](#) and my research [here](#)