



Report from the III Annual Student Archaeology Conference (ASA Conference), June 11 – 13. 2015, Edinburgh

Natalia TOŁSTY

The main goal of this Annual Student Archaeology Conference¹ was to gather young, future scholars and to give them the chance to present the results of their research or interests. One of the many advantages was the open character of this annual meeting. The participants included graduate and undergraduate students from different countries from around the world. The leading subject of the conference was archaeology but there was also some room for social sciences, anthropology and ethnography. Every year the organising committee suggests very broad topics such as developing integrated archaeology, animals and humans, culture or heritage. Thanks to this approach, the delegates are able to compare divergent views on a particular subject and to build a diverse, international social network. The first edition of the Annual Student Archaeology Conference took place in 2013 at the University of York. It became a tradition that each subsequent event is held in different city of the United Kingdom. After York, ASA Conferences were held in Reading and Edinburgh. The host of the Third ASA Conference was the School of History, Classics and Archaeology at the University of Edinburgh. The third ASA lasted from 11th until 13th June 2015. All the presentations were divided into four main panels: Applied Archaeological Theory, Scientific Archaeological Methods, Archaeology Beyond Academia and Historical Archaeology. Such a selection of topics enabled the significant role of archaeology in understanding the modern culture to be showcased. It is worth remarking is that the conference was concluded with a competition for the best posters and presentations.

¹On-line: <http://www.asaconference.org.uk/>.

The keynote lecture, *Difficult integration. Archaeology, Language, Genetics: the Indo-European Problem Revisited*, was given by Professor Colin Renfrew who is an eminent specialist in the subject of the theory of archaeology. His major research interests are European prehistory, the origins of language diversity and the application of the methodology of sciences such as physics or genetics in archaeology. Professor Renfrew lectured on the migration of Indo-European people based on the example of the Celts. By comparing archaeological, linguistic and genetic data he showed different interpretational perspectives of the same phenomenon. His conclusions were based on archaeological evidence from British excavations. The next point of the ASA conference was a round table discussion concerning the transitioning between academic and commercial archaeology. It was a great opportunity to listen to the stories of the successful commercial archaeologists and to ask them about their personal experience. Among the invited guest were: Dr Alison Sheridan (National Museums Scotland), Dr Andy Heald (AOC Archaeology Group), Gaille MacKinnon (Forensic Anthropology and Anthropology, University of Dundee) and David Connolly (BAJR, Past Horizons). In addition to sharing their stories, they also gave useful and helpful advice to future archaeologists. It was a very stimulating and inspiring debate since it confronted the labour market with the academic reality. The final part of the ASA Conference was an optional trip. The participants had several historical locations to choose from – the Museum of Edinburgh, Holyrood Park, the National Museum of Scotland and Rosslyn Chapel. This was a less formal but still an important element, because the guides gave the attendants an insight into the history, heritage and culture of Scotland.

There were two students actively representing the Jagiellonian University: myself (Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilizations and Institute of Archaeology) and Magdalena Krzemiń (Institute of Archaeology). Together we delivered a speech entitled *Cracow – how to transfer legend into reality* focused on showing the relationship between legends and archaeological and historical research. We explained the story about the curse of the royal tomb of Casimir IV Jagiellon and the customs of vampires' graves. Our participation in the ASA conference was possible thanks to the financial support offered by the “Bratniak” foundation and the Council of the Students' Research Groups.



Note about the author

Natalia TOŁSTY is an MA student at Jagiellonian University, Faculty of History (Institute of Archaeology) and Faculty of Philosophy (Centre for Comparative Studies of Civilisations). Her academic interests include: Mesoamerican death customs, feminism in Zapatistas movement and archaeology of Mesoamerica in general. Besides academic activity she is a travel enthusiast.

