

My career: Tara Doyle — Site Director at Headland Archaeology (Ireland) Ltd

Can Tara dig it? Yes she can!

Name: Tara Doyle
Age: 38
Lives: Midleton, Cork
Job title: Site Director (or Site Manager, same thing!) at Headland Archaeology (Ireland) Ltd.
Salary bracket: €30-45,000.
Education background: Bachelor of Science, Archaeological and Environmental Sciences, University of East London, London (1997); MA Heritage Management, University of Greenwich (1998)
Hobbies: Sea kayaking, rugby, reading and socialising.

Describe your job in five words: Fascinating, challenging, educational, analytical and unusual.

Describe yourself in five words: Enthusiastic, positive, adventurous, confident and funny.

Personality needed for this kind of work? You must be naturally inquisitive, observant, enthusiastic, love the great outdoors, have patience, have the ability to multi-task, be sociable and have a sense of humour.

How long are you doing this job? I have held a permanent position with Headland Archaeology (Ireland) Ltd since 2005.

How did you get this job? My interest for archaeology began at the age of five after a visit to excavations of the passage tomb at Knowth in the Seventies.

When I left school in 1989, I moved to the UK and kept an interest in archaeology by doing courses and volunteering when I could. I finally decided to make a career out of it in 1994 by doing a science-based archaeological degree.

On graduating from university, there was not much archaeological work about and the work that was available was about as not enough to pay the bills. I had to move away from archaeology for a while.

I was fast tracked into management by William Hill Bookmakers and worked as a relief manager for 12 betting stores across the east end of London. My work with William Hill provided me with a diverse set of skills.

Thanks to the Celtic Tiger years, I returned home to Ireland from London in 2001 to continue a career in Archaeology. There was plenty of archaeological work at that time. I began work with Headland Archaeology in 2005 and I became licence eligible in 2007 which means I have been given permission by the Department of the Environment, Heritage and Local Government to personally direct archaeological excavations.

Do you need particular qualifications/experience? A degree in archaeology is essential if you are serious about it as a career. Most graduates start working as archaeological assistants for a few years. This then leads to supervisory

Tara Doyle, site manager with Headland Archaeology Ltd.

Picture: Larry Cummins



levels and finally, holding a licence. The licence involves attending a governmental interview where you are tested on your legislative, archaeological and artefact knowledge.

Describe an average day at work: This job has two very different elements to it. In an average year, I would spend six months in the field and six months in the office.

In the field, an average day would involve arriving on site at 7.30am, opening up gates, temporary dwellings, tool sheds etc. The crew would arrive for an 8am start (could be anything up to 50 of them) and would be instructed on their tasks for the day.

Project management of the site takes up a lot of my time and I could be liaising with developers, engineers, farmers, machine drivers, health and safety officers and senior archaeological management etc on a daily basis.

The rest of my day would be spent accessing the archaeology, devising excavation strategies and ensuring the site is been excavated

and recorded to the highest standard by site staff.

After a site is excavated, we would bring back all the paperwork, recordings, photographs, site plans and sections, soil samples, bone (human and animal) and any artefacts recovered to our office in Little Island, Cork. At this stage we begin post-excavation analysis.

Initially, I would create a post-excavation strategy for the site, all on-site recordings are compiled into registers; these form the site archive. Many weeks can be involved in this process as all data must correspond and cross-referenced. Once compiled, a preliminary report of the site is written. All samples and finds are sent off to their relevant specialists for analysis and identification.

Once all specialist reports and radiocarbon dates are returned on the site in question and depending on the results, I can finally interpret the site and complete a final report. This takes approximately a year to complete.

How many hours do you work a week? 40 (but sometimes you lose track of yourself and spend hours researching on your own time).

What do you wear to work? On site — hard hat, high visibility jackets/vests, steel toe-capped boots, waterproof walking trousers and layers of warm comfortable clothes. It's not terribly glamorous! In the muck-free office, I tend to dress casual. Unlike the admin staff, I am hidden away so generally, I can wear what I want.

Is your industry male or female dominated? Slightly more female within Headland Archaeology (Ireland) Ltd. In general, the industry is slightly more male as a whole. This is possibly because many women leave to raise a family. As archaeology requires a good deal of travel and you can be away from home for months at a time, it is just not practical.

Does this affect you in any particular way? The majority of female archaeological directors are in their late 20s or early 30s; it is unusual to practice fieldwork into your 40s.

Is your job stressful? How? Rate it on a scale of 1-10: This is hard to quantify as no two days are ever the same! As deadlines approach it could hit a nine or 10, an average day would be a five to seven.

Do you work with others on or your own? I tend to work on my own in the office and liaise/delegate work with colleagues regarding archaeological matters. In the field I am responsible for staff on site, so I am kind of on my own there too!

When do you plan to retire or give up working? When I've paid off my mortgage! No not really, archaeology is amazing and I love what I do; I'll keep at it until either the work runs out, or I do!

Best bits: No two days are ever the same. It is thrilling to excavate a new site, as you never know what you're going to find. I also love the challenge of site interpretation and possibly discovering something new and interesting. I enjoy travelling the lengths and breaths of Ireland and meeting all sorts of people.

Worst bits: Cold, wet winters outdoors!

Advice to those who want your job? Be prepared to face anything! Archaeology is only one part of the job and it's not all glamorous. For example, I have frequently herded cows, sheep and goats, dismantled and reinstated fences and hedges and saved protected animals! The work can also be physical and demanding. Contrary to popular beliefs, you are more likely to use a shovel, a mattock and a wheelbarrow than a brush.

Any other comments? I often give talks and publish papers on various sites.



I'M AT a stage in my life when I do a lot of communicating — both for work and for pleasure.

I am a people person; I always have been and always will be. I noticed during the isolation of the unusually harsh Christmas weather, when I was housebound, that I missed human interaction.

In the customary text messages of 'Merry Christmas' and 'Happy New Year' I realised it took me a lot of time to send them because I had so many recipients for each message.

In the midst of all that, I changed mobile phones and lost a lot of phone numbers I used to have. Luckily, I have retrieved most of them.

This, coupled with conversations with opinionated friends, has caused me to start thinking about our convenient communication tools and how we use them.

Texting, in particular, has nearly run away with itself. For one thing — for me at least — it's free to any network once I top-up every month, so I use it to keep in touch very often. It's cheap, cheerful and direct.

However, I have started to wonder if I hide behind it and use the phone as a shield rather than looking someone in the face and saying what I

need to. In some instances, I know I have said things over text that I never would have the guts to say in person, so maybe then, I shouldn't have sent it at all?

On the other hand, maybe those things needed to be released and they are better out than in, whatever the medium.

Honestly, I am on the fence with this one at the moment, I just can't decide! I suppose it depends on the perspective of the person receiving the message as much as the person sending it.

I am glad that a good friend has brought this argument to my attention, because I had never stopped to consider how my text messages — that I view to be convenient and a sign that I am thinking of someone at any given moment — might be construed as an admission that I am too caught up in my own life to take the time and insignificant amount of money to pick up the phone and call the person, hear their voice and have a meaningful conversation with them.

The other side of the coin is that it can be extremely nice to get a simple message, a "random act of love" as my brother Philip once put it, to say that someone misses me, or loves me, or appreciates my friendship.

It is no secret that my mobile phone is always attached to me. I do, however, write letters and emails too and I am quite good at thanking people for their roles in my life, which I think is so vital for me to do.

I am incredibly fortunate to have people in my life that go to great lengths to help me, support me and make me happy. I am an extremely sentimental soul and love to acknowledge the people in my life every way that I can.

I think I will be more conscientious into the future about how often I use text message and try and increase my connectivity with those I feel are important to me.

It is nice to be woken up to habits I take for granted. I never want to be in a trap where I am so stuck in my ways where I am no longer open to change.

Change makes life exciting.

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