

1 11-14. Voluntary Coordinator of a community-based heritage, history and
2 archaeology group. Full-time Archaeology PhD student

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4 1. Currently I'm a full-time Archaeology PhD students at X University. I also have
5 another role as [leader] of [a voluntary community-based heritage group]. We
6 engage in a public archaeology event every year, I also do [site] tours and I spend
7 a lot of time talking to people about – because I'm writing my PhD on [a related
8 topic] so I do a lot of talks in the wider local history, genealogy and the
9 archaeological community about all things [linked to historic themes]. [SC: That's
10 fine – many people I've spoken to have several hats in their work. We could pitch
11 the questions at your voluntary role leading the group if that's alright.] That's
12 what I had more in mind. [SC: I think that's a good idea – it's completely up to
13 you. If it's relevant please bring the PhD in.] That's why basically when I was
14 looking at doing a PhD I'm combining what I already knew from 15 years of
15 heritage management [on a voluntary basis] into the academic sphere. [SC: So
16 when we look at the organisation..]. 11-14 explains the name and date of the
17 places the group is involved with.

18
19 2. XYZ is a Community Organisation

20
21 3. 100% volunteer work and I've got about 15 people who are terribly active.

22
23 4. Okay it's more like the fact that we've had as part of National Archaeology
24 Week we'll probably have all fifteen there for that week and on the week leading
25 up to it. But then there's one or two that do continuous work more on the
26 historical side trying to identify a lot of our very early [documentary] records
27 have been lost in [city X]. And a lot of other projects [linked to the XYZ heritage
28 site] have been identified and these volunteers have been trying to work out [the
29 names of people associated with these historic sites in the past]. Yes – archival
30 and documentary. [SC: Yes I do pitch these questions at Archaeology but of
31 course Archaeology has very permeable boundaries and...].

32
33 5. [SC: In terms of other community organisations that you are aware of is yours
34 big, small or you don't know..]. With other [comparable] groups in Australia?
35 [Comments on size deleted to preserve anonymity given the nature of the project
36 and small numbers of people involved]. We are the largest [place of similar type]
37 in our state.

38
39 6. State X

40
41 7. State X and Y [due to colonial history relevant documents for our place come
42 from both current states]. [SC: Where are they located?]. We've been finding stuff
43 at the [X and Y state libraries and archives]. Documentary diary evidence.

44
45 8.

46 SC: Do you communicate with people outside Australia? In the UK – mainly the
47 UK because in [year] I received a [travel fellowship] to go to [Europe] for 6
48 weeks to study visitor education programmes at [comparable] heritage places.

49 So six weeks and [numerous places] later in England, Scotland and Paris and so
50 I've developed quite a large network of people in [relevant] organisations.
51
52 9. We do a lot of education with the school kids. Heritage conservation when we
53 get money to restore [standing remains]. Our regular tour programme – tourists.
54 [Heritage tourism of this kind] is a growing business. Research. And heritage
55 management – conservation plans for [a related heritage-site].
56
57 10.
58 Personally involved with all of the above.
59
60 11.
61 Again it concentrates around [National] Archaeology Week and that's a full on
62 week as what we actually do is we run public digs in [our heritage property].
63
64 12.
65 Certainly just before Archaeology Week I did a bit of local radio. We've got a bit
66 of a fan on our local ABC radio here in [city X] who certainly wants to have an
67 interview. And the X City Council because [the site is on Council-owned land] and
68 we can use the resources of their people as well. And we've got our own websites
69 as well. [SC: Do you have websites?]. Oh yeah. [SC: So do you use – I suppose this
70 question is about whether you have a public relations professional]. No, no we
71 just use everybody. [SC: No that's alright. Some organisations have]. They do
72 have. We have a lot of people in the professional sphere who want to unleash
73 their inner archaeologist [as volunteers]. For example [a local politician] he's [a
74 professional in another field] before he became a local politician. He's always
75 wanted to be an archaeologist for example – so he's always good for a couple of
76 thousand when I need it. And then I can use his resources. He often – if I need
77 anything promoted – I can just drop it down at [his] office and he'll do the rest
78 for you. [SC: It sounds like you are in charge of managing your own media?] Yes.
79 No they usually come to me.
80
81 13.
82 I have a Masters in Education.
83
84 14.
85 Before I decided to change – I'm a late career changer – I had 16 years in tertiary
86 education [doing X] - I've had a completely parallel career. And before I burnt
87 out I used to be a top flight [Y] so talking in front of large numbers of people has
88 never been an issue.
89
90 15. n/a
91
92 16. [SC: You mentioned local radio.] Well when I got [a travel grant to go
93 overseas] I received more interest – more media minutes – on my [grant than
94 any other recipients – I was told]. It's says more about the employment policy for
95 the ABC than anything else. No I do a lot of media. I'm about to do some
96 television for a programme called 'X' because we're [celebrating an important
97 historic milestone on date Y]. As a living history exercise I'm recreating the

98 [important state X event] from [the late 19th century] complete with [period-
99 accurate props]. Yes so I do a lot of media. Mainly radio, some television.
100 Newspapers – well I’ve got a couple of tame journalists and here at X university
101 we’ve got a big journalism school and there’s always some second and third
102 years banging on my door wanting stories so I can get stuff out.

103
104 17. [SC: Sounds like you’ve had generally positive interactions with the media?]
105 Except that - can I be brutally honest? They are so young and they are so thick
106 and they know nothing about history. For example when I was talking about how
107 we lost so much of our heritage during [a period of political and economic
108 change a few decades ago] - the young lady was writing [something down] and I
109 looked at her – third year just about to graduate – and I said ‘You have no idea
110 what I’m talking about do you?’. And she said ‘No’. And I’m thinking ‘Go Google
111 [it]’ you know. [SC: Is this the journalism students?]. Yes – third year, third year.
112 She’ll be graduating in just a couple of weeks time. And the things is when you
113 realise [these events happened between the 1960s and 1980s] and she was born
114 in 1991. And so when I’m talking about history, archaeology, heritage I find I
115 have to work so hard giving them background before they have any concept of
116 what they are writing or talking about. [SC: Is that because they are students?].
117 No, no – because they’re young. [SC: So have you had similar experiences like
118 that with younger people working in the media – not just studying at uni?]. Yes –
119 well see – when they come out and they’re doing their cadetships at the local TV
120 stations [...] we’re [fairly near] to some local TV stations so we get the cadets
121 down as well. So they are actually working the field as professional journalism
122 cadets. They’ve got their degrees, they’re out there reporting our news. They’re
123 like 20 years old, 22 if you’re lucky, and in trying to understand about [history
124 and heritage] they’re looking through their own experiences, or their own
125 experiences through the media. When I explain to them most people [did X, Y, Z
126 in the past and what life would have been like] ...just trying to get through to
127 them this basic concept. They’re all very-well versed about ANZAC Day but they
128 seem to have lost every other form of history.

129
130 [SC: When you are working with media people – do you find they facilitate you in
131 putting forward the content? You know – they use you as an expert and
132 represent you – rather than messing it all up?] Yes it can be variable and
133 sometimes when [newspaper Y] are going to send someone out I say can you just
134 tell me who? And sometimes they mention who and I just roll my eyes back and
135 think ‘not again’.

136
137 19. They mainly come to me. If you type in [the name of our main heritage site]
138 into a search engine – the name of our heritage group - our website tends to
139 come higher than the X City Council’s. And we’ve got a fill-in form and we get
140 requests from all over the world about [our heritage site]. We spend a lot of time
141 dealing with people having their own personal [...“Who Do You Think You Are”
142 meets “Time Team” experience]. Because we had such migration from the UK
143 coming into the colony in the first place. Part of my PhD is looking at the
144 transmission of British [cultural traditions] and [their transformation in an
145 Australian context].

146

147 21. Perhaps to answer that I'll just explain in particular why we are [running an
148 excavation] for National Archaeology Week. [Details removed to retain
149 anonymity]. [Due to the particular recent history of the site] we can [invite
150 members of the general public to participate in an archaeological excavation
151 without contravening local heritage protection laws]. We've been doing this
152 exercise every year for six years now. And it's eagerly anticipated.

153

154 23. During NAW we have a day when we have primary students come in. Then
155 we have a day when secondary school students come in. So not only do they do
156 the digging activity they do measuring activity, matching activities. So there's an
157 education programme within the [heritage site]. Then we have the rest of the
158 days as just straight public digging.

159

160 SC: University students? Yes because we do this programme in conjunction with
161 the University of X. You know how hard it is to find digging practice for first
162 years? [SC: First years? My goodness. We'll send you ours]. Yes well because
163 we're [located within easy travel distance of the university] so when the first and
164 second (years) come out they have a bit of trowel practice. So they can also have
165 a bit of 'real life' experience where basically they can ride their bikes to so we've
166 got the uni students come out as well. The field supervisor for the project is Dr X
167 [from a local university].

168

169 24. School kinds, university students, U3A (University of the Third Age) and
170 [Rotary Clubs].

171

172 25. Project X is not [our group's] first excavation and local history project. Our
173 first one was under [a major building construction project] now. When Dr X was
174 doing the excavation there in [the 2000s] they uncovered [a large number of
175 historic features and archaeological finds] at the site [linked to the place where
176 we are working now]. And [people were interested in the relationship between
177 the two projects]. 'How come [you find this at one site] and none [at the other
178 site?]. That's when you get into the taphonomy and the pH of the soil and the fact
179 it was used as a rubbish dump for many years and all these sorts of explanations.
180 And people do have that - they try not to show they try very hard. You can see
181 they are desperately interested about it but are pretending they are not
182 desperately interested but they do want to see [particular types of artefacts]
183 people pull out of the ground for example. [SC: Are you working with other
184 experts and professionals in your work?]. Yes basically it's the academic staff
185 here at the [university].

186

187 27. No.

188

189 28. [No hesitation]. Yes I think I usually do get the message across as you can
190 usually see it in their faces when you're explaining things like [the city where we
191 are now] had the [largest number of X,Y,Z] in [the late 19th century] than
192 anywhere in the British Commonwealth. And when you start to say 'We're
193 standing on [this exact spot] now if you excavated [right here] you would find
194 remains of [something really interesting and engaging to public audiences] for
195 example. And then when you see them instantly step away [laughs] you know

196 you've got the message going through. [SC: Do you do any formal evaluation?].
197 With the school activities it's observational activity and they either find what –
198 they've either found or measured what you've asked them for – the right answer
199 – or they haven't and you work through the exercise with them.
200
201 30. Yes we've got a basic website up and I'm just waiting to see if I've got a grant
202 to expand it dramatically. But what I'd like to do is put up some podcasts because
203 I've been listening to some of the podcasts from some [comparable sites in North
204 America]. There's a fabulous one that's come from [place X] in the US about
205 where they were combining a tour of their [historic buildings] and [the local
206 environment and surroundings] – going through all the different [natural
207 resources and materials] that were used [to build and run the place]. What I
208 want to do – we can't always have tour guides available so what I want to have is
209 some special interest tours [...] recorded on podcasts so they can download them
210 to their iPods, download the map and then they can take themselves on a self-
211 guided tour of [the area] whenever they like. And then when they come to the
212 archaeological site we can have the explanation of what we are doing. [...]. So we
213 want to make the [local history and heritage] more available all the time. [SC: Is
214 it just a matter of funding that's holding you up on doing that?] Funding and time
215 at the moment. The PhD is pretty full on [laughs]. [SC: That sort of technology is
216 fairly standard on...]. We own all the equipment. We've got the digital recorder,
217 we've got a lovely little handy cam it's just a case of making.. yes. I go into these 'I
218 have a dream' sequences. [SC: Would you personally prepare all the content for
219 that?] Well I'm getting subject experts to do – for example – one of the people in
220 my organisation is mad keen on [topic X] and he can do the audio tour. I just set
221 them on their way with their own projects – make and record their own material.
222 [SC: So you have people researching in your organisation and you are going to
223 use their expertise to put up podcasts that will then help people to go around the
224 cemetery.] Go around the [area] and also interpret the finds and also symbolism
225 [in architecture and decoration] ... [deleted to retain anonymity] because [there's
226 a lot of public interest in these topics deriving from currently popular historical
227 novels, fiction, films and television]. [SC: When you [travelled to the UK] did you
228 find examples of those types of site presentations were common over there?]. I
229 found that – this is the interesting thing – [a lot of Australians I know through my
230 interests] found the same thing. That the grass is not always greener in the UK.
231 [SC: Ah – yes – I know that cos I'm from the UK and I live and work here [in Aus].
232 I think Australia does things pretty good actually.] Yes – for example from [place
233 X] in London – everybody thinks they must be the bees knees and I'm thinking
234 'Right – well you pay five pounds to go into [place X]. You get a snooty
235 disinterested guide who takes you round on a 45 minute circuit. You've got to
236 pay for a licence to take photos and then they have the hide to rattle the tin at
237 you again when you leave.' Now we do our activities free. I do have a tin which I
238 very occasionally rattle but for activities where everybody can participate
239 everything I do I try and make cost recovery if I get a grant and then we expend.
240 For example our big [forthcoming event] it's going to cost us about \$10,000 to do
241 by the time we have [the historic re-enactment]. So that's living history and
242 people just don't get to see that. And I figured we do far more here. I did find
243 some good ideas in isolated [heritage sites] but it was only down to switched on
244 individuals but on the whole it was all pretty moribund.

245

246 32. I'm told my [heritage site] does need a Facebook page but I haven't gone
247 down that road yet mainly because it's just time. Once you set something up you
248 really really need to maintain it and I'm trying to get a couple of younger people
249 more involved in the organisation – say a couple of the [archaeology] students
250 and to say right and so we would have a Facebook page for the [site]. For
251 example I'm a reluctant Facebook user and I'm only on it because the Association
252 of [X] out of the US uses Facebook quite a bit for its communication. And then
253 you can do a couple of virtual run [topic relevant] conferences on Facebook as
254 well. But we get 20 to 30 emails a week to deal with. That's enough. [SC: So
255 obviously you have email – is that on your website?] On the website there's a
256 form which you can fill in – the enquiry form. But people will email us and we
257 have a mobile phone and people will text us and..[SC: So you're already doing a
258 lot of this stuff – even though you are not using Facebook?]. Not yet – but it will
259 happen – probably when I finish the PhD.

260

261 33. Now that the National Library have put all those newspapers online. I waited
262 before I started my PhD until the newspapers got online. For example when I'm
263 trying to pinpoint events like when did they stop [activity X]. For example what
264 I've discovered in the last couple of days when [explains details about research –
265 deleted to retain anonymity]. And I found that out only by using the newspapers
266 only because of the very sophisticated search engines they've got on Trove. If
267 you want to know when something happened it's when people started talking
268 about it. So if you just do a search string 'X,Y,Z' you can see there's no mention of
269 this phrase until 1902 and then you can see it spread around. For example I
270 traced the start of the [X process] to a single meeting in [city X] in [date] just by
271 clever use of the keyword searching. [Further details of research content
272 deleted].

273

274 34. The main challenge at the moment is the [local] Council is trying to sort out
275 [some of its archives with relevance to the history of our site and put them
276 online]. Because they got theirs online in [the mid 1990s] and it is desperately in
277 need of an upgrade. [Discusses incompatible data structures between the
278 historical information collected by the voluntary community group and that
279 already collected by others and that it's hard to link information together and
280 find images etc.] We've been told by the end of the year [the council will have
281 improved its online archives to make them more accessible and interoperable]
282 and [our organisation has also been consulted] about the kind of search
283 functionality we really want to have.

284

285 35. And I'm a competent technology user.

286

287 36. Well I actually know a lot more about the computers at the [place my
288 voluntary group operates] than [some manual workers employed there to
289 maintain the buildings] who try to use them – they mainly being older men. And I
290 get the job of un-jamming the photocopier as well.