

Archaeology International

Alumni Reflections

Maria Phelan, BA Archaeology, 2001–04

Maria Phelan^{1,*}

How to cite: Phelan, M. 'Maria Phelan, BA Archaeology, 2001–04'. *Archaeology International*, 2023, 26 (1), pp. 231–2 • DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/AI.26.1.18>

Published: 30 December 2023

Copyright:

© 2023, Maria Phelan. This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution Licence (CC-BY) 4.0 <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>, which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original author and source are credited • DOI: <https://doi.org/10.14324/AI.26.1.18>

Open access:

Archaeology International is a peer-reviewed open-access journal.

*Correspondence: phelan_maria@hotmail.com

¹Director at the Robert Carr Fund for Civil Society Networks

Maria Phelan, BA Archaeology, 2001–04

Maria Phelan

Starting university and moving to London is a daunting experience. In 2001 I began a BA in Archaeology at the Institute with some trepidation. After the shock of Primtech, now retitled Archaeo-Tech, I found the Institute to be a world of its own: a university within the university. I enjoyed the atmosphere of camaraderie, and like many school-leavers I found to my surprise that I quite enjoyed learning when I had a choice and interest in it.

This enjoyment was shaped by the people I met, often through fieldwork. In my final year I was lucky enough to work with Barb Voss of Stanford University in her excavations of the Presidio of San Francisco. Barb's focus on feminism and the politics of archaeology inspired me, and have continued to influence my work. At the same time, I was beginning my dissertation research on public archaeology with Tim Schadla-Hall. Tim was a brilliant and eccentric supervisor, and I became part of his loyal gaggle of former students who kept in touch with him and with each other: 'Team Schadla-Hall'.

After leaving the Institute I was interested in youth work and found a job in student support at a school in North London. I knew from my personal experience that learning through practical experience could spark deeper interests, so I decided to run an archaeology project at the school. I called Tim, and he sent Sarah Dhanjal, Gabriel Moshenska and a few others to help run the dig, and put me in touch with Don Cooper and the Hendon and District Archaeological Society, who were

generous in their support. I also roped in my old Institute flatmate Peter Ginn. The project we started ran for six years, long after I left the school, and I'm proud that one of the school students who participated in the project went on to do a BA and masters at the Institute.

From working in the school I moved to work in sexual health and HIV with the Terrence Higgins Trust and National Children's Bureau. I began to focus on the intersections of HIV, human rights and community-based public health. I worked as Deputy Director of the NGO Harm Reduction International, coordinating public health research and advocacy. From there I moved to the Robert Carr Fund in Amsterdam, which supports community-led responses to HIV worldwide. I am now the Director of the Fund.

Like many Institute alumni I've moved a long way from my archaeology studies, but good friendships and the Schadla-Hall network kept me in touch. Tim gave a reading at my wedding when I married one of his other former supervisees, and I treasure the memories of our dinners at Pizza P.



Figure 1 Maria Phelan (Source: The Robert Carr Fund for Civil Society Networks)