

# Ralph Mills

Curriculum Vitae, January 2018

My professional background includes some 20 years working as a peripatetic field archaeologist, mostly on rescue projects, which included supervising the excavation and recording of challenging and complex threatened heritage ranging from Hadrian's Wall to Dover's Roman forts, during which I acquired extensive experience and advanced skills in field archaeology. Latterly I have focused on a more academic approach to historical archaeology, obtaining both an MA and PhD. My interwoven commercial career has complemented my archaeological and academic interests by involving research, communication, writing, editing, IT skills, desktop publishing public relations, marketing and photography.

For further background information, see [www.ralphmills.com](http://www.ralphmills.com) and [www.firesofprometheus.org](http://www.firesofprometheus.org)  
ORCID reference: [rcid.org/0000-0001-9566-4915](https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9566-4915)

## Skills and experience:

---

- **Archaeology:** supervision of first-class excavation under challenging rescue conditions. Whole site and feature recording (site plans, feature recording, surveying, finds illustration and photography). The safe and effective leadership and motivation of large teams of volunteers and professionals. A natural communicator, responsibility for public engagement; guided tours, open days, displays, lectures, posters and leaflets.
- **Writing:** communicating lucidly and accurately with all audiences and all print media, specialising in presenting complex technical information in a reader-friendly manner that attracts and retains readers. Successful interaction across continents with stakeholders, colleagues, clients and contacts from the shop floor to CEOs and top civil servants.
- **Editing:** Turning the raw materials of communication into attractive, meaningful end-products. Copy and sub-editing of everything from children's books to scientific journals.
- **IT:** significant experience of desktop publishing, web site creation, office programs and image manipulation software.
- **Volunteer management:** Having been involved in volunteering since my teens, I am a natural, committed leader, able to enthuse and motivate others to achieve goals safely and effectively.

## Recent activity:

---

### PhD student: 2012-2017

#### Manchester Institute for Research and Innovation in Art and Design, (MIRIAD), Manchester School of Art.

My research topic was "Objects of Delight: An investigation of miniaturisation focusing on nineteenth century mass-produced miniature objects in working class contexts."

### MA Tutor, University of Salford: 2015

Working one-on-one with two Heritage Studies MA students to mentor completion of their dissertations. Both achieved distinctions.

### MA student 2009-2010:

Historical Archaeology. Department of Ancient History and Archaeology, University of Leicester.

### Writer/Editor (freelance) 2007-present:

Director: ConBrio Associates Ltd.

I co-own this marketing communications and business management consultancy that doubled its turnover in only three years. Researching and writing complex technical features for lay readerships. Report research and writing. Web copy and access consulting.

### Marketing and Communications Manager: 2004-2006

Ergo Computing UK Ltd, Nottingham,

Led the UK marketing team in a medium-sized IT manufacturing company. Created new department and team. Managed upgrades of marketing functions, exhibitions, print materials and web site.

## Previous activity:

---

### Field Archaeologist, 1970-1998:

Kent Archaeology Rescue Unit: Volunteer, then supervisor. Faversham Roman villa; London Forum; Horton Kirby granary; Dover Roman forts; Dover *mansio* ("Painted House"); other minor excavations in Kent (4 years).  
English Heritage: Planning and photography supervisor, Piercebridge Roman fort (2 years).  
National Trust: Assistant Director, Hadrian's Wall excavations (6 years).  
Hertfordshire Archaeological Trust: Director, Chells excavation, Stevenage.  
Other short-term rescue projects in Northamptonshire, Essex, Yorkshire, Somerset, Monmouthshire.

### Writer/Editor (employed and freelance) 1973-2007:

Printing trade magazine, Children's books (*I-SPY books*, London); local newspaper (*Faversham News*, Kent); scientific journals (Elsevier/North-Holland Scientific Publishing, Shannon, Ireland); corporate communications (Dewe Rogerson, London). Wrote and designed websites and collateral for public sector and private sector clients.

### Business Development Manager:

PLATO Learning Inc, Vancouver, BC, Canada (1994-1997), and PLATO Learning Ltd, High Wycombe, Berkshire (1998-2000). Business development for an education software company. Top salesperson in Canada and in top 5 per cent of parent company. Exceeded sales targets every year.

### Business consultant:

Self employed; London, Canada.  
Corporate communications. Research and encouragement of community engagement for public sector clients.

### Education:

---

- PhD: Manchester Institute for Research and Innovation in Art and Design (MIRIAD) Manchester School of Art, Manchester Metropolitan University, January 2017.
- MA (Distinction) Historical Archaeology: University of Leicester, August 2010.
- BSc (Hons) ARCS, Zoology (2:2): Imperial College, University of London, July 1970.

### Recent publications:

---

- Mills, Ralph (2018). 'A chimney-piece in Plumtree-court, Holborn': Plaster of Paris "Images" and Nineteenth Century Working-Class Material Culture. In *Paraphernalia! Victorian Objects*. Kingstone, Helen and Lister, Kate (Eds). London: Routledge, pp 99-121.
- Mills, Ralph (2016). Everyday Magic: Some Mysteries of the Mantelpiece. *Public History Review*. Vol 23, pp 74-88.
- Mills, Ralph (2015). The prosaic platter. In Brown, Steve, Clarke, Annie and Frederick, Ursula (Eds) *Object Stories: Artifacts and Archaeologists*. Walnut Creek CA: Left Coast Press, pp 139-146.
- Mills, Ralph (2015). Material Culture in Miniature: The Historical Archaeology of Nineteenth Century Miniature Objects. In Brooks, Alasdair (Ed) *The Importance of British Material Culture to Historical Archaeologies of the Nineteenth Century*. Lincoln NA: University of Nebraska Press, pp 243-273.
- Mills, Ralph (2014). Why your trash is an archaeologist's treasure. *Popanth* January 6th. <http://popanth.com/article/why-your-trash-is-an-archaeologists-treasure/>
- Mills, Ralph (2010). *Miniatures in historical archaeology: Toys, trifles and trinkets re-examined*. Master's thesis, Department of Archaeology and Ancient History, University of Leicester. [http://www.firesofprometheus.org/dissertation\\_1.pdf](http://www.firesofprometheus.org/dissertation_1.pdf)

### Recent presentations:

---

- *Italian Image-sellers, Plaster of Paris and Working-class Mantelpieces*. The International Conference on the Image, Venice, Italy 2017.
- *Images of Taste: The nineteenth-century working-class mantelpiece - plaster parrots, Napoleons and Venuses de Milo*. The working class at home symposium. London: Geffreye Museum 2017.
- *Cats, parrots and Napoleons: the global materiality of the nineteenth century working-class mantelpiece*. All Things Victorian: Exploring Materiality and the Material Object conference, 2016. Portsmouth: University of Portsmouth.
- "Buy My Images! Very Pretty, Very Cheap": Image Matters conference, Manchester School of Art, 2015.
- *A Little Vertical Archaeology*: Strata conference, University of Birmingham 2016.
- "Buy My Him-a-ges!" Victorian Border Crossings symposium, University of Wolverhampton, 2016.

- *Material Memories and Spirit of Place: Art of Cultural Mapping conference*, Coimbra, Portugal 2014
- *Some Mysteries of the Mantelpiece*: Society for Historical Archaeology Annual Conference, Quebec 2014.
- *Saudade: In Search of Material Memories*: Design for Desertification conference, Idaha-a-Nova, Portugal 2013
- *Bric-a-brac: Bad Things on the Mantelpiece*: Good and Bad Things symposium, Nottingham Trent University, 2013.
- *Mischief on the Mantelpiece*: Performative Mischief symposium, Loughborough University, 2013.
- *£0.99 Archaeology*: Contemporary History and Archaeology in Theory annual conference, York 2012.
- Poster: Paraphernalia! Victorian Objects symposium Leeds Trinity University, 2015
- Poster: Manchester Metropolitan University postgraduate conference 2013.

---

#### **Volunteer activities and interests:**

**Volunteering:** Leader, Waterway Recovery Group Canal Camps; MIRIAD Student Representative, MMU Graduate School; Vice-Chair, MMU Mature Students Society; curatorial volunteer, Nottingham Industrial Museum; other volunteer activities have included chair and secretary of allotment committee, Canadian Cancer charity, Douglas College language mentor etc.

**Interests:** music (oboe/cor anglais; performance – classical, folk); photography; running; hiking; cycling.

---

#### **Online presence:**

**Web sites:** [www.firesofprometheus.com](http://www.firesofprometheus.com) (historical archaeology); [www.ralphmills.com](http://www.ralphmills.com) (professional).

**Social media:** Twitter: @archaeologyman; LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/ralph-mills-9462833>.

---

Ralph Mills PhD MA BSc (Hons) ARCS  
 140 Austhorpe Road, Cross Gates, Leeds LS15 8EJ  
 07799 897 597  
[ralph@ralphmills.com](mailto:ralph@ralphmills.com)