

Aitchison, Kenneth, 2011. *Breaking New Ground: How Archaeology Works*. (Kindle Edition) £2.87

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Kenneth Aitchison, the Executive Director of Landward Research, an organisation revived and renamed following his departure from the IfA in 2010, has recently published an online book. The book aims to address the direction that archaeology is taking by providing an in-depth look into the history and development of UK archaeology, covering important and influential eras, the impact of socio-political climates, changes in the discipline and the rise of new approaches such as private funding, CRM and planning policies, as well as other issues that affect archaeology and its practice directly or indirectly.

This e-book, originating from Aitchison's doctoral thesis (a comfort no doubt to those who question the legitimacy of citation and validity from online publications) is an extremely valuable contribution to a growing interest in the sociology and history of archaeology, serving as an impressive guide to a period starting with the 1800s and running to as recently as 2010. Having strong and detailed up-to-date work on the shelf so quickly has a potentially positive impact on future research. Actually, Aitchison himself claims that his intention had been to publish as quickly as possible, so that the work may be relative and relevant to our times, one of the benefits of the electronic book. The novelty of providing such a great book online for a humble cost of £2.87 not only offers



an answer to wider participation and access, but also allows us to explore the arrival of the e-book and of portable devices capable of storing hundreds of books and articles. As a strong advocate of the printed book, publishing and libraries, I do not believe that the e-book will necessarily mean the death of printed publication any time soon. However, it is surely a tool to open access and

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open scholarship which so desperately needs the support of individuals such as Aitchison, known to the UK and European professional community.

While the book is divided into four simply titled chapters, Aitchison provides 23 useful case studies to demonstrate a wealth of themes throughout the book, and provides thorough coverage of archaeology's separation from state, the development of archaeological units and their changing roles, the move towards the planning system and the legislation and guidance that came with it, the organisational structures of archaeology and how it sits in with the current climate for increased environmental and sustainable development, market failures, local governments, employment and so on. While it examines UK archaeology intensively, there is no doubt that this narrative will provide a basis for discussion and perhaps even contestation by those who have different views on any of the periods covered – particularly as the time period extends to a past so fresh in people's minds. This aspect, although expected from any revisionist and historical approach to a particular subject, might

provide further richness of insight. For those professionals, non-professionals and scholars who are interested in UK archaeology, the book does offer a fantastic narrative and analysis but, most importantly, food for thought through the range of coverage and detailed use of data. Both Aitchison's writing and reasoning in this book, witnessed also in other works and publications, means the book is an easy-read - a page-turner if you will - and also allows the reader to develop a comprehensive understanding of where archaeology is as a practice today and how we – as individuals and organisations – might contribute to change in the adoption of ethical practice and pro-activeness. Indeed, this book will be an interesting addition to equally valid and existing alternative narratives, and should also encourage others to consider the importance of quick publication, or at least online access, in a time of fast-paced changes and challenges, particularly now that archaeology finds itself within a very competitive market place.

The book can be downloaded from Amazon onto a smart phone, kindle, tablet/ipad, mac or PC and is worth more than it costs.