

The Archaeologist

Issue 101
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TA102: Archaeology has become very processual, and even routine. We tend to do similar things in similar ways – and quality benefits. But what happens when the context changes, becomes more extreme, and the 'usual process' just won't work? How is quality of output – in research and reporting – maintained? We mean real archaeologists doing real work in very unusual circumstances.
Deadline for abstracts and images: 1 August 2017

TA103 will be looking at the professional pathways that are opening up in archaeology, how these can help to address the issues of capacity and skills for the sector and what we can do to make them the norm.
Deadline for abstracts and images: 1 December 2017.

Contributions to *The Archaeologist* are encouraged. Please get in touch if you would like to discuss ideas for articles, opinion pieces or interviews.

We now invite submission of 100–150 word abstracts for articles on the theme of forthcoming issues. Abstracts must be accompanied by at least three hi-resolution images (at least 300dpi) in jpeg or tiff format, along with the appropriate photo captions and credits for each image listed within the text document. The editorial team will get in touch regarding selection and final submissions.

We request that all authors pay close attention to ClfA house style guidance, which can be found on the website: www.archaeologists.net/publications/notesforauthors

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Cover photo: Crossrail tunnel excavations. Credit: ICE



Collaborative archaeology: professional standards and non-expert participants in archaeology

Lisa Westcott Wilkins MCIfA (7976), Managing Director;
Brendon Wilkins MCIfA (4494), Projects Director; and
Manda Forster MCIfA (4823), Programme Manager,
DigVentures



Top of the list of favourite moments on site is discovering artefacts; that feeling of uncovering something ancient, or not-so-ancient, is special to everyone. Credit: DigVentures

DigVentures launched in 2012 as a social business building collaborative archaeology projects in the UK and beyond, and has been a ClfA Registered Organisation since 2013. The DV approach is embedded in the digital economy, utilising crowdfunding, crowdsourcing and digital technology to increase opportunities for public participation in archaeological research. Our core aims include achieving public benefit, being accessible, and meeting professional standards; maintaining Registered Organisation status helps DV demonstrate our principles in practice to colleagues in archaeology as well as the non-specialist audiences with whom we work.

To date, we have worked in Cambridgeshire, Cheshire, Suffolk, Gloucester, Lancashire, Northumberland, Wiltshire, Yorkshire, and Spain. By the end of 2017, we will have expanded our reach with projects in Scotland and the USA. This year we were invited to speak at the Remix Summit, a global summit for culture, technology and entrepreneurship, and at the time of writing, we are on our way back from the latest Society for American Archaeology conference, taking part alongside National Geographic, the Cotsen Institute, The National Science Foundation, UC Berkeley and the Penn Museum in a session entitled 'The Future of Funding for Archaeology'.

“I've always been interested in archaeology so supporting DigVentures is actually selfish on my part, because by supporting you I get to take part in the adventure.”
Digital Digger

As a small but growing business, being linked to ClfA – an internationally recognised professional body – lends support in new sectors and regions, and enables us to keep pushing forward with our innovative approach whilst providing surety as to the standards of our work.

Given that our primary audiences are non-experts or students, training is a key aspect to DigVentures' excavations and we are recognised by ClfA as an Accredited Fieldschool. Our curriculum is tailored to provide instruction from one-day or weekend experiences through to several weeks on site with our team, with each aspect of fieldwork addressed through discussion or practical experience. We met the challenge of providing an accurate and top-notch training programme across widely varied experience levels in our participants by tying it directly to National Occupational Standards for Archaeology, which has allowed us to build a flexible approach to learning including one-to-one coaching and mentoring on site, as well as lectures, toolbox talks and – from summer 2017 – an online course introducing practical archaeology. We encourage our attendees to use the BAJR Archaeology Skills Passport, especially those who are planning to enter the profession, do more volunteering, or who intend to come and work with DV again.

“The reason I supported Dig Ventures is that the emails, Facebook, etc. are very, VERY good and have just the right mixture and have, albeit virtually, made me feel part of the team!” *Digital Digger*



Completing the site records using DigVentures' web app recording system, Digital Dig Team, is all part of the Venturers' onsite learning experience. Credit: DigVentures

Although you don't have to be a Registered Organisation to have access to these training tools, it would be wrong to say that accreditation is irrelevant in the context of working with people outside the profession. In our experience, even though major funding bodies don't require ClfA membership (perhaps something the scheme could encourage more), it is relevant to community-orientated projects and does matter to those who take part. Our Venturers are professionals too – teachers, photographers, bankers, lecturers, solicitors, social workers – and they recognise what a chartered professional body is, and understand accreditation. Being part of ClfA allows us to demonstrate that the work we do has met certain standards, and that we are transferring best practice skills to everyone who joins us on site.

For us, ensuring that the work done by our participants is visible in the official site record is another step towards being truly collaborative; building projects within communities, opening up to new audiences, having transparent research objectives and accessible archives. Our archaeological record is co-produced using our digital recording system Digital Dig Team, which provides a uniquely transparent and instantly live site archive. All

DV records are on show from the moment the context, find or sample is recorded; mistakes can be made, but they can also be corrected and interpretations updated in the same way as with any site archive. Handing over the reins (or the iPads in our case) and having our Venturers complete the site records themselves is a key part of the experience for many who get involved. We absolutely believe, and have demonstrated through our Registered Organisation status, that professional standards can be maintained whilst simultaneously providing once-in-a-lifetime experiences for our participants. As a community-focused organisation, the most important aspect of maintaining our Registered Organisation status is that it demonstrates to our colleagues, expert and non-expert alike, that we are serious about what we do.

“I have always wanted to take part in a dig but have never had the chance so my husband bought me a Dirty Weekend!” *Weekender*

“It was amazing, great archaeology, interesting people and I learnt a lot. I couldn’t wait to come back again this year. It’s a fantastic project to support.”
Digger for a Day



Edwin and his perfectly sorted finds trays – we aim for every participant to have the opportunity to undertake the full spectrum of archaeological tasks. Credit: DigVentures



Lisa Westcott Wilkins MCIfA (7976)
Managing Director

After nearly a decade in New York City working in communications and finance, in 2001 Lisa decided to pursue her passion for archaeology by completing a Masters (with Distinction!) at UCL Institute of Archaeology. Since leaving UCL, Lisa has applied her professional background to archaeological endeavours, including as Director of Museum Operations for the launch of the Museum of the Earth, and Editor of *Current Archaeology* and *The Archaeologist*. Lisa is part of the Heritage 2020 working group for Public Engagement, and is responsible for the absurdly strong site coffee and early morning DV dance parties.



Brendon Wilkins MCIfA (4494)
Projects Director

Brendon is an award-winning field archaeologist with over 15 years’ experience directing and managing large, complex sites in advance of major construction projects, such as motorways, pipelines, and railways. With a consistent research and publication record, he has lectured internationally on wetland archaeology, Irish archaeology, and new advances in excavation methodology. Brendon is currently pursuing a PhD at the University of Leicester, entitled: ‘Digging the Crowd: the future of archaeology in the digital and collaborative economies’.



Manda Forster MCIfA (4823)
Programme Manager

Manda joined DigVentures following a five-year stint developing membership engagement and communications for the Chartered Institute of Archaeologists and other professional bodies. Before that she was Post Excavation Manager at Birmingham Archaeology, where she also managed the Practical Archaeology programme at the University of Birmingham. She is currently involved in developing DigVentures’ educational programmes and managing the organisation’s project programme.