BAJR GUIDE 5:

101 BAJR tips for New and Old Archaeologists:

Learn more on the BAJR Federation Forum

http://www.bajrfed.co.uk
Clothes

1. Buy a cheap 99p thermal hat and cut the top off, then over your head and round your neck. Toasty and warm in winter and does not fall off or get in your way.

2. Rigger boots, tough, cheap and practical
   (Over recent years rigger boots have become popular because they are easy to put on and are a cross between lace up boots and wellingtons. However some companies have found that wearers of rigger boots are much more likely to suffer twisted or sprained ankle injuries. They think this is because rigger boots are a looser fit and the wearer is less able to prevent the foot from twisting to the side on uneven ground. This is the reason that some contractors will not allow them on site. This is an acceptable argument and you need to understand and comply with this rule.)

3. Tucking trousers into rigger boots will end up with boots full of mud, stones and other various dirt related objects.

4. Don’t leave steel toe cap boots &/or wet jackets overnight in a metal box site hut - for it the road to hypothermia 10 seconds after putting them back on in the morning on a winter site.

5. Para boots might look cool but they are not safety boots and certainly not mattock proof.

6. Donkey Jackets are cool and they are clever.

7. Gortex is waterproof, expensive and rips within minutes of arriving on site!

8. Kneepads are sent to save your knees.. However a better and more comfortable idea is the (removable) kneepad trouser (oh yes!)

9. Fingerless gloves with the slip over flap...mmmmmmmmmmmmmm Toasty

10. Don’t put your hard hat on over your woolly hat, it makes you look like a right nutter and stops your hard hat working properly. Rather, stuff the aforementioned wool hat inside the hard hat, behind the straps. This will insulate the hard hat and keep the aforementioned head snug!

11. Army surplus is good because it does not matter too much if you trash it.
12. Will men of any endowment please never wear shorts on sites.. the view of a “squashed prawn” is never enjoyable.. less when you are trying to eat yer lunch!

13. Never put up with discrimination or bullying on site - inform your supervisor or management in writing - Read the RESPECT Guide and stay safe.


15. Wear clothes appropriate to the job and the weather. Simple advice but sometimes not taken.

16. Rewaxing spray for Barbour-type jackets can be used on most articles of clothing - allow to dry between layers.

17. For really wet conditions, you will need the waterproof trousers. (sweaty!!) Make sure that they can be put on over your boots though!

18. A hi-viz jacket should be provided by the company if required.. but why not get your own!

19. TK Maxx for cheap decent clothes… nice woolly jumpers!

20. The final look should be somewhere between an Afghan tribesman (circa 1875) and a paramilitary unit from Angola.

“ I used to have a cammo jacket but now I can’t find it.”
21. When the blade falls out of your trowel handle, pour superglue in hole push in some sand/silt, shove blade in, pour in more glue then more sand. (Finally, visit hospital to get said trowel removed from fingers.) -Of course now, since the redesign, the WHS is no longer doing that - we can’t comment on other trowels! and can’t even believe in such a thing! - If you need to buy a WHS Trowel: Get on down to Past Horizons Tools

22. Learn to use each tool and use it for what it is intended. A shovel is not a sledgehammer - a spade is not a shovel – a mattock does not sharpen pencils, unless in the hands of a skilled psycho!

23. Work for a company that gives you free high quality PPE including Waterproofs, Wellies and a tools… anything else is just not on!

24. Carry your own kit at all times... pen, pencils (2H -6H) rubber, line level, plumb bob, marker pen, penknife, 5m handtape, string (masons line!) ... you should never let them out your sight... and believe me.. Although people might wonder why you are carrying them... pretty soon they will be begging to borrow them just for a second. - Get a tool roll ( again from Past Horizons - anything else is just ....well... not!)

25. Wrap your trowel handle in colourful tape, preferably the knobbly sort for good grip. You might look like a bit of a tw*t to start with but when your mate’s searching the spoil heap for their trowel you can smile smugly.

26. Wheelbarrows should never be overfilled - fill to the front and they almost drive themselves!

27. A Barrow run is not designed to test your off-road abilities - if it is, then it is a “BAD” barrow run.

28. The leaf-blade is the true sign of a professional.... oooh professional!

29. JCB buckets should never have teeth.. it tends to make the archaeology a bit difficult to recognise! in the mashed soil Make sure it is a toothless trenching bucket! - Tell em!

30. A 5m handtape is good, an 8m handtape is better.. any handtapes bigger are suspect!

31. Surveying arrows and bulldog clips… a match made in heaven (also handy for kebab parties!)

32. A golf ball is very handy as a temporary survey point… highly visible, easy to press into the ground and also easier than trying to balance an prism staff on!

33. If your site has gridiron points then put soft balls on them to stop you losing an eye!
Excavations, Sitework and Post Excavation

34. Drawing sections and using a dumpy level... always turn your Hard Hat 180 degrees around or you will never see what you are drawing or worse, you will knock the dumpy level off level!

35. Do not attempt to prise out that innocent small stone from your nicely cleaned section, it is liable to be 2 foot wide and 3 foot long.

36. Make sure you have enough tea, coffee, GOOD biscuits (and/or cake!) - make sure you join Archaeology Tea Club on Facebook to ensure you know what is what (Yorkshire Tea!) - search for it... you can do it!

37. Nobody will question what you’re doing if you’re carrying a clipboard.

38. Learn the slipknot for tight string action on sections!

39. Never sit on damp ground.... you will have piles of trouble! (plus keep a good diet – yeah right!)

40. Ask only questions that will make your supervisor look like a Tw@t

41. Talk to each other... its the only way to discuss a site. and stay interested in your little section

42. Learn how to do a Harris matrix. http://www.harrismatrix.com/

43. Make sure you know what you are doing... and if you make a mistake... say so... A mistake admitted to is as good as doing it right... not saying is like trashing a site with a JCB!!

44. Don’t tolerate health and safety issues that are a threat.

45. Don’t take anyone’s word for safety until you’ve read their risk assessment. Then question it.

46. A small personal first aid kit is a good idea – especially plasters that stick!

47. Don’t take on a Project Officer position without seeing the project brief/method statement first.
48. It takes experience to feel the difference between a slightly gritty friable grey silty sand and a mortar inclusion within a grey sandy silt. It is unfair to expect someone to be able to do that right away.

49. If you want to have a good time whilst reconstructing skulls with solvent based glue, do it in a small unventilated office for 5 hours, and then try and walk home in a straight line.

50. You know you have been looking at skeletons for too long when you start to have meaningful conversations with them, and find one that you think is good-looking.

51. County Archaeologists are there to help (honest) if you feel the site is either more or less interesting… give them a call!

52. A planning board should never be larger than the planning person.

53. The magic numbers for a right angled triangle (use when laying out trenches) are: a 1m x 1m has a diagonal of 1.414m; a 5m x 5m has a 7.07m diagonal; a 10m x 10m has a 14.14m diagonal; and let us not forget good old Pythagoras and the 3 - 4 - 5 triangle!!

54. Digital cameras are not there to allow you to take more blurry poorly laid out shots! Think about the image first.

55. Hand cream for when the skin on your fingers starts to crack would be worthwhile. – I prefer Norwegian Formula… chapped hands are sore!

56. Patellae are not, and never will be, rocks, and should not be chucked on spoil heap as such; same applies to hand and foot bones. (Note to all, block lifting is a good idea and the osteologist may be eternally grateful.)

57. When digging a skeleton and you get to the knee caps; pop them into your coat pockets (right in right etc) then put them back when you are ready for the photograph. (but remember about them!!)

58. Remember ; left hand / right hand…. left foot / right foot… into 4 separate bags!!

59. Troweling in a squatting position might seem a good idea, but it’s not in the long term. To repeat previous advice, USE KNEE PADS
60. Learn how to use a camera properly. Avoid automatic settings.

61. Upon registering a bit of glass as a small find and dutifully bagging it in water-don't then proceed to pierce the bag with little air holes!

62. When filling in context sheets write neatly or print, preferably in capitals.

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63. Despite rumours to the contrary, archaeologists have the right to certain amenities-ask why they haven't been provided.

64. A toilet behind a tree is not acceptable any more… if you are out in the field you must have access to a toilet (in fact one for females and one for males)

65. There must be accommodation on site for staff to either get warm, stay cool, eat, wash hands, etc - It is the law!

66. If you are in a place for some time, a group could get together and rent a place cheaper than one!

67. If you travel to work you are travelling to work like anyone else, if you drive other workers to work you MUST be insured and MUST be paid for this. No matter what is said, if you have an accident you will soon see just who is responsible.

68. There is nothing like the freedom of a camper van, and think of the rent you save!

69. Sleeping in a Site Hut is not and never will be …fun. Trust me!

70. A tent is fine, but do not leave valuables in it.

71. Never ever Drink and Drive. If you go to the pub… either walk or have one person as the designated driver… It is NEVER ok.

72. Travel light!
73. Biggest tip ever, get that golden driving license. It will make you so employable!

74. Get a CSCS Card (better than a degree if you want to work in commercial archaeology!)
http://healthsafetytest.co.uk/answers/7858/what-sort-of-card-does-an-archaeologist-require

75. Pack a few bin bags (large type), they come in handy for your sodden gear, also great to throw your steel caps into rather than losing friends by tracking copious amounts of mud through their vehicles. They can also double as emergency rain gear when your caught short.

76. Check local papers and papershops for adverts about accommodation.

77. Try to have at least one decent meal a day. Snackfood and Lager is not a balanced diet.

General Hints

78. Do not ever lend anything to anybody if you ever wish to see it again in this lifetime.

79. Perfect the art of looking like you are doing something whenever a supervisor walks past.

80. The phrases “that will do”, “oops”, “it was there-honest” or “but he/she told me to…” are not admissible in a court of archaeology!

81. The sure fire way to find the most important, rare and complete artefact on the whole site is to hit it with a mattock/shovel/machine.

82. Remember, flint is sharp, no matter how long it’s been there.

83. Do not try to impress the students by baton twirling with a steel grid peg, especially if you cannot in fact baton twirl. (Stabbing yourself in the side does not look cool and carries a tetanus risk.)

You are NOT Indiana Jones or Lara Croft
84. The most interesting feature on any site is always half covered by the spoil heap. *(not only is the most interesting feature on site half covered by the spoil heap, but you only notice it on the last day, when you’re packing up and the developer is poised with massed JCBs to take the site down to bedrock.)*

85. If you drop your trowel down a full portaloo DO NOT ATTEMPT TO RETRIEVE IT. The lower flap can become wedged open, but the slightest movement will make it spring up. Trowels are cheap compared to counselling.

86. Don’t try to sharpen / grind down a new trowel to look as if it has seen a lot of action. - that is almost as bad as wearing a trowel holster!

87. Leaving ‘fragrant’ socks hanging up in the site hut is not the way to make friends and influence people.

88. If your an aspiring supervisor - acting, assistant or otherwise, if you don’t buy ots of nice biscuits cakes and/or donuts we will all hate you and bitch about you behind your back.

89. Always tell people how great BAJR is! *(Ok...optional!!) (well no actually!)*

90. There is NEVER an excuse for poor pay!

91. Wait until the end of a site to ditch your girl/boyfriend.... trust me... you do not want to spend weeks being hated by half the site and laughed at by the other half!.. also makes new relationships a bit strained!

92. Marry a non archaeologist, then they will not have anything against you!

93. Never, ever tell someone sitting next to you (on a train/plane etc) what you do for a living

94. Always ask if you don’t know, or read about a subject, or ask and read!

95. A metal-detectorist or a local historian will know more than you about where you are digging… ….. Listen to them - they may have something to say - they may also be fruit loops. - Learn to tell the difference but always remain polite.

96. Thrown into the deep end results in drowning. - Commercial archaeology is a whole different ball game from gentle volunteer digs. Be prepared!
97. If you smoke-buy a Zippo. (Product placement) But it will mean you will not be an old archaeologist.

98. When members of the press arrive on site un-announced, escort them off it.

99. Archaeology is supposed to be FUN!

100. The public is your friend! No really

101. Did I say use Kneepads?

Learn from those older and laugh at yourself first. Go to the excruciatingly funny My Cartoon Version of Reality and enjoy a pant wetting cartoon for archaeologists. If you get it... you are one!