BAJR

Guide 41

Enabled Archaeology

BAJR Practical Guide Series

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ENABLED FIELDWORK

by Theresa O'Mahony

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1 Introduction

Archaeology fieldwork which is accessible for all participants no matter their current physical or mental circumstances can be achieved with only a few minor adjustments and often at little or no financial cost to the organiser or contractor. Of course some manual team work is required prior to commencement of the excavation, this should always be the case, with individuals, working together to support each other to the benefit of the team. This guide provides a general overview and offers a brief insight into what is possible with a little thought and consideration. A large bibliography and link section provides further details on a number of pertinent resources.

Just as every excavation member makes a valuable contribution to a dig, disabled archaeologists/people are no different, by being enabled through being totally involved with all choices for their participation, attitudinal acceptance (Phillips *et al,* 2007, 18) and the following methods.

Figure 1: Team work Invisible Disabilities and Physical Disabilities

2 Pre-Excavation

Whether advertising placements, jobs, or fieldwork vacancies asking these two questions within an application form gives the enabled participant a chance to be open about their specific needs and gives you knowledge to '…anticipate any reasonable adjustments needed ….' within the Equality Act 2010 (EA) (Schedules 2, 15 (Parts 1, 2.3, 2.5-8), 20) http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/sites/default/files/documents/EqualityAct/servicescode.pdf (Chapter 7, link 7.80).

1 *'Do you have any Special (or functional) requirements? Disability and Access Yes/No If you have answered yes to Q1, please give details in the box below.*

I have the following Special / Functional requirements (Diet, Medical etc)

2 *To enable us to ensure that we can assess your needs and how we can best make it an enjoyable and beneficial experience for you, please explain briefly why you would like to attend (or work).' (Adapted from Defence Archaeology Group, (b), 2015, 8).*

For you to decide whether an enabled participant can take part in an excavation, it is more positive for all involved to focus on their abilities rather than their dis/abilities and this action will produce effective results (Phillips *et al,* 2007, 6). Individual care plans and risk assessments aid inclusion, for instance a blind or partially sighted participant learning the whole layout of the dig and being completely familiar with their trench before excavation. Observation of enabled participants in their first few days of excavation can help solve any unforeseen risk factors which can be used to adjust their own individual plans (I.P's) concerning their personal excavation methods. Preparation and planning for disabled enabled participation before the beginning and reviewing participation at the end of each season is advised.

3 Excavation

Equal access of use for all team members of all ramps and equipment is encouraged (Fraser, 2008, 182) within the following methodologies:

1. *Rough terrain can be accessed by wheelchair users through use of an attachment to any wheelchair (see Wheelchair Archaeology, p 6):*
   http://www.draftwheelchairs.com/shop/free-wheel.html?___SID=U

2. *Access to trenches can be made by building an earth ramp which ends in the trench approximately a metre before the start of the excavation, where wheelchairs and equipment can be left in one of the safe zones (see Figure 1) or taken back up the ramp. Enabled participants can self-propel, use a helper to wheel down the slope or physically roll down the ramp without a wheelchair (Defence Archaeology Group (D.A.G), 2015: O'Mahony, 2015).*

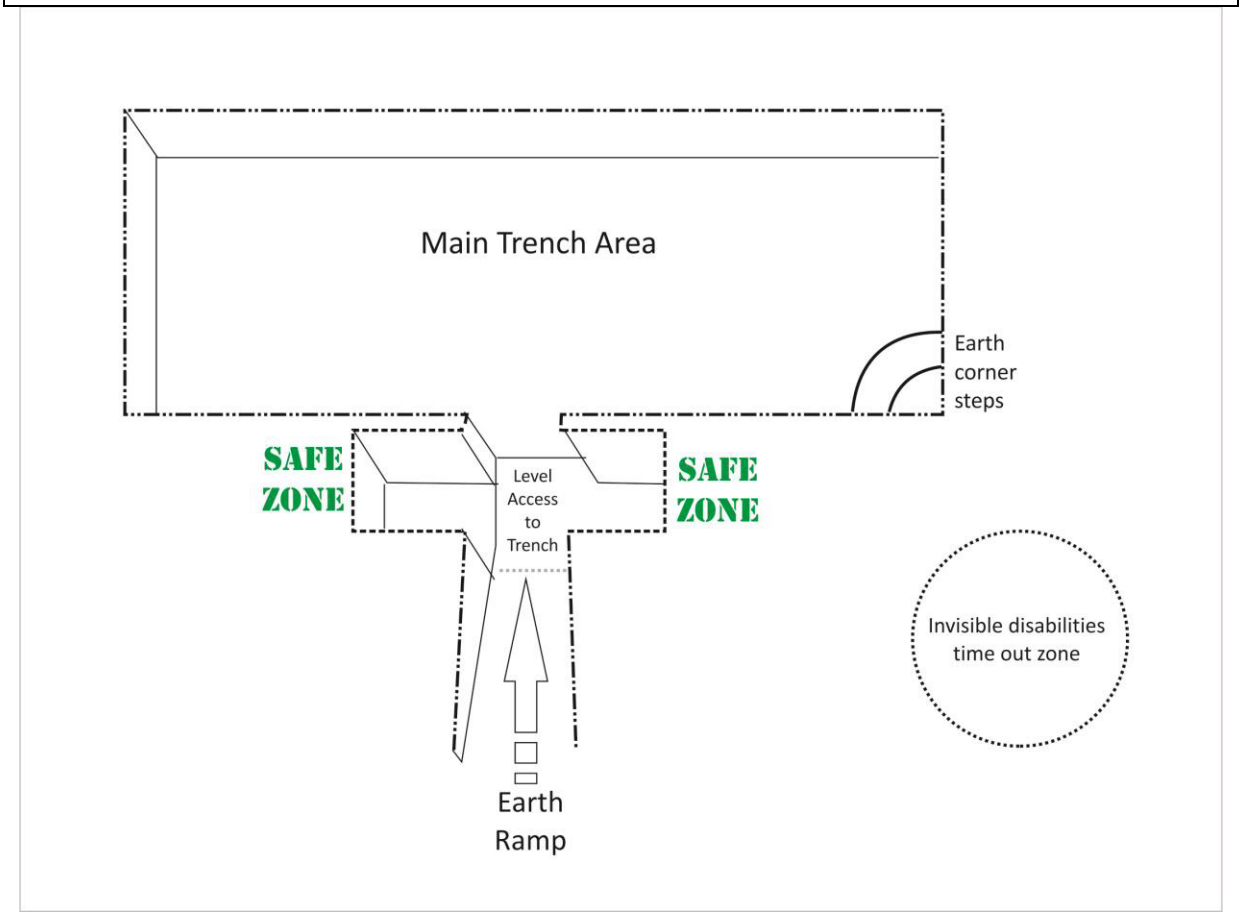

Figure 2 Plan of an accessible trench

Earth Steps can also be cut into the edge of the trench which can help certain physical conditions, to access the trench.

3. *If enabled participants need more comfort to dig, use any old pillow, cushion, even part/s of a mattress, wrap them in any durable waterproof material and secure with masking tape.*

4. *Attachment of tools for those with loss of any limbs can be done in two ways:*

The Defence Archaeology Group (D.A.G), which is part of Operation Nightingale, uses tape to attach trowels to the remainder of an upper limb, or if there is use of only one finger a spoon can be attached in the same way for excavation/trowelling.

If there is use of one hand my idea is to use these gardening tools which can be adapted/used with a swap system incorporated. This swap system aids those with weak grip or wrists, partially sighted, difficulty in bending, or could be used for an enabled participant with one part of an upper limb.

Tools: http://peta-uk.com/shop/easi-grip-trowel/ cost £11.95-£17.90 (2015)

Attachment tools: http://peta-uk.com/shop/easi-grip-arm-support-cuff/ cost £5.95 (2015)

5. *Blind participants can use a sharpened trowel, after each trowel movement, using their other hand to feel where they have just trowelled to ascertain if there are any minute sherds or artefacts (Nutt, 2013, ¶ 9 and10).*

6. *Invisible disabilities (ID's) are prevalent amongst 1 in 4 of the UK population, (Mind, 2013, ¶ 1), with 53.5% of archaeologists having some form of hidden disability (Rocks-Macqueen, 2014, ¶ 9). Whitestone's (2014, Whole Screen) advice can aid social familiarization of ID's for all team members including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder;* **Myalgi** *tiredness after physical/mental activity) and deafness.*
http://everydayfeminism.com/2014/09/ally-people-invisible-disabilities/

7. *It is important for those with mental health impairments to have an area away from the trench where they can have guaranteed time alone, whilst still observable from a distance (see Figure 2/).*

Figure 5 Example of self-coping strategies

8. *Having standard rules helps ID's on excavation to gain a feeling of safety and reassurance, that they are part of the social group.*

9 *Social activities in the evenings outside the excavation work, gives the vital social interaction many invisible disabilities need to build up their confidence in social situations.*

10 *During a dig a sense of camaraderie, banter and in certain circumstances using a buddy system (Phillips et al, 2007, 31) can establish a feeling of belonging, therefore acceptance for enabled participants.*

11 *Artefact handling by blind enabled participants post-excavation is an essential approach to participants 'seeing' an object. A thin pair of plastic gloves will give the 'feel' or 'view' of an artefact, whilst protecting the artefact from hand moisture/oils (Nutt, 2013, ¶ 14).*

12 *Finally, disability awareness training of team members of any dig is to be encouraged, as what is unknown can become known and therefore familiar. Familiarity encourages acceptance and welcoming attitudes, as able-bodied participants get to know and become confident in disability itself.*

4 Surveying

Wheelchair users can do field walking by either using a grabber to pick up artefacts in the area ahead of them or going beside the area to be searched and bending over to retrieve items on the ground (although this can only work for some medical conditions). There is always a way for enabled participation in archaeology, whether in finds, environmental sampling or desktop survey pre-excavation. The buddy system is not arduous, and keeping an eye on any colleague working in a trench should be standard. Fun and banter between all team members definitely encourages inclusivity!

5 Record Keeping

Dyslexic archaeologists/people make up 15.5% of the archaeology world (Rocks-Macqueen, 2014, p 9) and can have significant difficulty when reading or recognising numerical figures. By keeping the words/numbers in records, in a large font such as Ariel, with slightly off white paper will make it less difficult to read. Thin sheets of separate coloured plastic or rulers (called an overlay) can be put over records/computers for people to be able to read text more easily, each individual usually requires a single different colour of overlay (Grant,

2005, 52). These can be brought at: http://www.thedyslexiashop.co.uk/coloured-overlays.html Cost £1.99 - £5.28 or more! (2015)

Blind enabled participants can write up their site reports on their own braille displays, which they can then translate into the written word by their own Duxbury software (See Useful websites).

Figure 6: Supporting each other, one person doing the physical work, another sorting out the recording.

6 Wheelchair Archaeology

The cheapest way to access rough terrain is to use your own wheelchair with this all-terrain attachment, which costs £350: http://www.draftwheelchairs.com/shop/free-wheel.html?___SID=U Rather expensive but you can access even rougher terrain by buying or hiring the MT-evo it's £4,550 which gives you full independence and no batteries are needed! It can be used from £99.00 a month, or ...ountaintrike.com/product/mt-evo/ Getting in and out of your ...e ground/trench: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VI8-p329L20 ...).

Outdoor ground level seat £12.49 for trench: http://www.amazon.co.uk/Highlander-Outdoor-Seat-Blue/dp/B002WUJC5U

7 Acceptance

All Disabled/Enabled participants of digs, need to be shown attitudinal acceptance, socially and emotionally. As Phillips *et al,* say with just a few minor alterations (with little financial cost), which '…are arrived at through knowledge and understanding' (2007, 19) many enabled participants can and could participate in Enabled archaeology to-day.

8 Conclusion

'The greatest feeling of accomplishment for me is the fact that I was an athlete who was somewhat disabled'(Toomey, 2015, Whole Screen).

Athletes and archaeologists have the same attitudinal focus to their work, with one vision to win the race or gain valuable archaeological evidence for interpreting the archaeological record. However, disability can often be viewed as an impossible obstacle to fully participate in any excavation. Views expressed regarding some UK excavations suggest that participation is an absurd idea, which holds back the progress of a dig, loses valuable archaeological evidence if disabled people participate (O'Mahony, 2015, 32). Attitude issues can impede full inclusion at any excavation, with so many excavation opportunities offered yet a section of the archaeological population not allowed to participate (O'Mahony, 2015, 32).

Yet at Operation Nightingale's Defence Archaeology Group family attitudes prevail, my own experience there, filling me with confidence and Enabled Ability rather than my Dis/ability. On this project can be seen, full acceptance; attitudinal barriers gone; serious mental and physical impairments addressed in a sensible and collective manner. Team support and acceptance bring massive rewards for all of us enabled participants. Attitudinal barriers are easy to build but just as easily can be knocked down if the following key points are addressed:

1. Allow an enabled participant to work freely within the trench, if they need help they can ask a Buddy to aid them, over compensating attitudes can damage people's feelings and their own perceived capabilities.

2. Provideoptions to address the skillsets that suits them individually. For example I thought I could never section again but with team encouragement I did it!
3. Don't disregard applicants for placements and jobs, just because of their disability Barriers are quickly dispelled when a disabled/enabled person is active onsite (O'Mahony, 2015, 38).

Operation Nightingale's attitudinal approach ensures the same, treatment of all team members – this includes banter, comradeship, fun and laughter as we excavate. Enabled participants want to be treated as part of the excavation team, accepted and not impaired by attitudinal barriers which limit more, than disabilities. With just a little preparation and review and a small financial outlay, many more enabled participants can take part in excavation today.

By gaining awareness of how to treat disability within archaeology, you will 'Know me for my abilities and not my disability?' (Hensel, R.M, 2015, ¶ 4).

In our profession it should not be archaeologists and disabled archaeologists, but simply archaeologists working together in a team. By viewing everyone the same, attitudes towards disability can change and aid equality for all within field work and all areas of archaeology to-day.

Useful Websites:

Becoming familiar with Invisible Disabilities: HTTP://INVISIBLEDISABILITIESUK.WEEBLY.COM/

Braille Machines and Translators: HTTP://SHOP.RNIB.ORG.UK/BRAILLE.HTML

Case Studies of Disabled Archaeologists:

HTTP://WWW.ARCHAEOLOGYUK.ORG/ACCESSIBLE/CASESTUDIES.PHP

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