

4th. Edition: January 2014

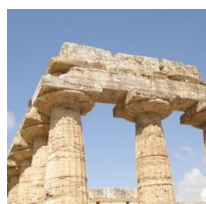
THE THIRD AGE TRUST



THE UNIVERSITY OF THE THIRD AGE

Archaeology

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Setting up a U3A Archaeology Group 2014 / 15



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INTRODUCTION

1. This Guide

The aim of this leaflet is to get you thinking and to provide suggestions for you to consider. It is written for anyone who is thinking of setting up a U3A Archaeology group in their local U3A or for existing group leaders who are checking for ideas. It is not written for professional archaeologists, nor by one. It should be remembered that far more good ideas will exist in U3A Archaeology groups around the country than are in this guide and any suggestions for improvement will be much appreciated. The leaflet is not an introduction to Archaeology as such introductions are best written by the professionals and many excellent books are available. Please see the Disclaimer at the end.

2. First things

Whatever your knowledge or experience in Archaeology, your group will be doing what you and your members want it to and it can be as loosely or as tightly connected to Archaeology as you wish. The group leader is the facilitator / organiser of the group but it is important to remember you do not have to be its resident expert. You may be, for now, but this may change as new members join and it really does not matter. A most rewarding aspect of leading any U3A group is, over time, the emergence and development of individual members' different skills and competencies as the group evolves and matures.

As a group leader in a U3A, you are never alone. Your group will give you help and support, probably as much as you need. Beyond your members, in your own local U3A there will be other group leaders and members of the Committee with whom you can discuss "group" issues. Other U3As, not too far away, may have Archaeology groups and making contact with these can be very productive. There are national archaeological organisations and, of course, this website and email address.

3. What is "Archaeology"?

Here are some definitions of Archaeology / descriptions of what archaeologists do.

"Archaeology is the study of the human past through the material evidence people have left behind"

“Archaeologists ... systematically locate, examine and interpret remains left behind *on the ground* (eg buildings, hillforts, stone circles), *under the ground* (eg stone tools, bones, pottery) and *beneath the water* (eg boats, submerged settlements).”

“Archaeology is the study of the material remains and environmental effects of human behaviour: evidence which can range from buried cities to microscopic organisms and covers all periods from the origins of humans millions of years ago to the remains of 20th and 21st century industry and warfare. It provides us with the only source of information about many aspects of our development. Milestones such as the beginning of agriculture, the origin of towns, or the discovery of metals, can only be understood through the examination of physical evidence. Archaeology also provides essential information for periods of the past for which written records survive.”

“If History is bunk, then Archaeology is junk. This bizarre subject entails seeking, retrieving and studying the abandoned, lost, broken and discarded traces left by human beings in the past. Archaeologists are therefore the precise opposite of dustmen, though they often dress like them.”

4. Who are the archaeologists?

Professional archaeologists include those working in universities, museums, local or national government agencies or in commercial consultancy or contracting units. University archaeologists are involved in teaching and research. Professional units engage in paid excavation which is frequently “rescue archaeology” carried out as part of the planning process ahead of building development. The standards professional archaeologists work to are very high.

Amateur archaeological groups are local, regional or national groups or societies made up mainly of interested amateurs. They vary a lot. Some groups carry out practical work, others do not. Some are purely archaeological, others are combined with a historical group into a joint society. Some include highly qualified and experienced archaeologists in their membership, others do not. Some are large and well-equipped, some are very small. Some are highly respected and acknowledged but not all achieve this status. The activities they carry out can vary from holding lectures, visiting sites, publishing newsletters and journals to conducting their own archaeological fieldwork and research. Locally based groups are sometimes called Community Archaeology groups.

Community Archaeology itself is one of the growth areas in archaeological research to-day. In this, a combination of people such as professional archaeologists, members of amateur groups and trained local volunteers work together on a co-ordinated research project. Local involvement and reporting back to the community are given a high priority.

5. What is “U3A Archaeology”?

Archaeology in your U3A group is what you and your group want it to be as long as you do not break any rules. Your interest may be in learning about the past and building up your knowledge of it. Or, you may decide to do your own investigations, potentially a very rewarding aspect of the subject, and this might be sparked off by anything you do e.g. a visit to a museum or a historic site or even someone’s particularly interesting old house. An investigation might lead you into a study of a specific period or locality with all that might involve and this could include history, local history or even family history. Your interpretation of Archaeology can be as broad or as narrow as you choose.

Archaeology can have a strong practical component and you could consider whether your group might go down the “practical” route or not and, if so, how far. Of course, you do not have to do any practical work at all and many groups will choose not to. Digging can be very interesting but should only ever be carried out by U3A members under strict controls – please see 28 below.

GETTING GOING

6. Decisions

In getting a group going, you will have to decide where and when you will meet and how big the group can grow to. For your normal indoor meetings, speak to your Groups Co-ordinator about a venue – there may be a local room / hall where groups meet. Failing this, you will probably be meeting at a member's house and this may affect your maximum group size. How many can the room comfortably hold? It can be a good idea to establish a limit to the group in advance e.g. 12 persons and have a waiting list beyond this.

Your U3A may have a normal frequency for its groups' meetings e.g. once a fortnight or once a month. Once a month can be useful as it does not put too much pressure on you as the organiser. An average length for an indoor meeting, morning or afternoon, might be 2 hours, but plan for possible overruns. Whatever you decide, it is likely it will not be convenient for some and a common reason for this can be a clash with a different U3A activity. All you can do is speak to your Groups Co-ordinator and try to choose a time and day of the week which has as few clashes as possible. You will be trying to find what suits the majority of your members but you need to take care that it is also convenient for you. You may have to have your first meeting before final decisions are made on when and where meetings will normally be held. Please also see section 9 below.

7. First meeting

Your first meeting is very important and needs to be prepared for but there is no need to worry unduly about it. People are unlikely to come along expecting you to be an expert on Archaeology but will be pleased you are taking the trouble to set up the group. The central issue is what the group is going to do so members should prepare for this by bringing along suggestions. You could consider each member saying why they are joining the group and what their particular interests are. In addition to this, it can be a good idea to have an activity to do, for example you could ask each of the members to bring along something old they have found in their garden or somewhere else. These items can then be discussed e.g. what they are made of / were used for / tell us about the people who used them etc.



The meeting dates ahead need to be decided so people should be forewarned to attend with their diaries or calendars and they should be told there is information you will be needing from them such as names, addresses, email addresses and normal and ICE (In Case of Emergency) telephone numbers. It will also be important at this meeting to set out what the lines of communication will be between you and your group members. Regular contacts by email can be very useful but those without this facility should be given equal access to information.

With meetings generally, always have a plan about what you will be doing but do not worry if you find it gets sidetracked somewhere along the way. U3A members are very sociable and ANY comment or remark can spark off a lively conversation which takes on a life of its own. Make sure you remember the refreshments as everyone looks forward to their tea / coffee and biscuits.

8. Other meetings

How far ahead will you plan what you are going to do in each session? You may be highly organised and plan it all well in advance, or you may start off with a few ideas and then float from topic to topic following people's interests and suggestions. Some continuity is advisable and it is probably not the best idea to "cherry pick" what might seem to be the most interesting topics straight away.

One approach might be to select a topic of interest to your group, perhaps a particularly interesting local site, then break it down into sections and study it over successive meetings. This could lead to further “spin off” topics. Another approach might be a more wide-ranging study of changes over time in the UK or your local area starting with a particular period and going up through time. Or you could concentrate on one particular topic with local examples e.g. Bronze Age. This might involve studying the HER/SMR (see section 11 below) to discover the range and location of finds in the area, looking for books in your local library and searching on the internet. You could build up a picture of artefacts, activities and the way of life of people in this period / culture. Different aspects (pottery, tools etc.) could be farmed out to different members who could report back on them. See FINDING TOPICS, pages 6 -13, below. As an integral part of your studies there could be visits to local or regional sites.

Your activities are likely to be affected by the weather and time of year. Practical work is often best done in July or August and look out for local Festival of British Archaeology events (see 26 below) in the second half of July. Visits to outdoor sites are probably best avoided in winter but the same would not necessarily apply to indoor destinations such as museums, Roman villas etc. if they are open. Trips out are always likely to add interest and enjoyment to your studies (see 21 – 25 below) and some groups make trips their main activities.

Whatever you plan to do, at some point you may find you come across a particularly interesting topic which stretches out over several meetings and develops into a project. When this happens, it is great but at some point it might be a good idea to decide how you will round it off and put a time limit on it (see 14 below).

Bear in mind that if you do all of the organisation yourself your group members may come to increasingly rely on you to do all the planning and preparation and may not throw up ideas and suggestions of their own. Delegating tasks can include sharing the work preparing for meetings.

9. Handing over

From time to time, it is worth handing over responsibility for a particular meeting, topic or event to a member of the group. You could start with the deputy leader, if you have one but, for any member of the group, organising a specific event, such as a visit out, can be something they are happy to do. If people are slow to come forward it may be time to put your foot down and gently insist that others take on some of the meetings. Even if it is something as simple as “Sites I visited on holiday this summer” it is well worth doing. Your group member will be grateful afterwards and will tell you it made her / him read those guide books s/he bought and increase her / his understanding of what was seen. Other members will love it and be encouraged to do their own meeting and you will feel refreshed and will very likely find the session has stimulated your own new ideas.

Nevertheless, it is possible that a time may come when you question how much longer you will carry on with your Archaeology group and you can, of course, step down from your group leader role at any time you like. There are all sorts of reasons why you might be considering this but if it is simply that you are running out of ideas then there are probably things you can do about it. Hopefully, this leaflet may throw up some thoughts and liaison with archaeology groups in other U3As may provide new ideas or possibilities for joint activities. One way forward on this is to see if it is possible for a neighbouring group leader to add you to her / his group email circulation list so that you are kept up to date with everything they are doing, with you returning the favour. If you have been doing a succession of unconnected or short-term topics at your meetings it might be time to set up a project which will last for several months. And if interest seems to you to be flagging, have you been doing many day trips recently? U3A members generally love going out on trips particularly if there are nice places to eat and sit as well as seeing what they have come to see. If you do not like organising trips,

delegate it. If you are feeling washed out and exhausted it may just be that you are doing all the work yourself and it could be time to hand over the next few meetings to other members.

This said, there is no reason why anyone should expect their group to last for ever so why not anticipate from the outset that it may have a limited life? In your very first meeting you could suggest that the members give the group a try for a year to see how it goes. If everyone is happy, including you, it can then continue but with you making the point you might want to hand over in another two or three years or so. This then gives you the option of staying on, handing over, disappearing from the scene or setting up a second group as, after all, you will by then have a long list of topics which you can repeat. No-one should be upset as you stated what the situation would be right from the very start and the group can keep going if someone else takes over.

10. Kitting out?

Will you or your group members have to buy any special equipment for your studies of Archaeology? NO! Outdoor visits may require advice on appropriate clothing (eg footwear, waterproof) but specific equipment is unlikely to be needed and your most useful tool will probably be the internet.

Even for someone who is thinking of participating in externally organised excavation, the tools used may well be supplied. The one item of excavation equipment that is worth considering getting may be a thick garden kneeler. Many archaeologists do not use one but a kneeler or kneeling pads can help to protect the knees.

Someone wanting to go further might wish to have their own trowel. If so, it is better to buy a new one than use something that has been lying around in a shed for years, may be coated in old mortar and probably has a blade that is a bit too big and springy to be of much use. What they should be looking for is a pointing (or “point”) trowel with a 4 – 4½ inch (100 – 110 mm) flat blade as anything longer than a 5-inch blade is not likely to be of much use as it will spring and flex. These can be bought at DIY shops / superstores or ordered online but you must check for the blade length as for building work they are often longer than that which the archaeologist requires. They might cost £4.00 – £8.00 or so in a shop and have the blade welded to the tang. These are normally fine for excavation, as long as the blade is the right length. Trowels with the blade riveted on are not seen so much these days, could give a weaker joint than a weld and are best avoided.

If they are serious about excavation, they might want to go for a forged archaeologist’s trowel. This is a trowel where the blade and tang have been made from one piece of metal so the blade should never break off. The traditional archaeologist’s trowel in Britain has been the WHS trowel, now made by Spear and Jackson as WHSTyzack. Other makers include Battiferro, Ragni & Marshalltown.



There can be small differences between trowels such as in the length of the tang (distance between the blade and the haft), the type of handle (eg wooden or soft grip) and whether the edges of the blade are sharpened or not. Note that foreign manufacturers can have straight-edged “London” blades (preferable) or gently curving-edged “Philadelphia” blades. The best bet may be to check an archaeological supplier’s website where a range of trowels can be compared, along with their costs (likely to be £5.00 - £15.00+, excluding postage) e.g. the Archtools website



<http://www.archtools.eu/archaeologytrowel/>, Past Horizons <http://www.pasthorizontools.com>, or (some) Amazon <http://www.amazon.co.uk>.

FINDING TOPICS

11. Looking locally

A local dimension to what you do can be very important as such topics are often of great interest to local people, may be relatively easily accessible and potentially there should be a lot of them. They can also provide gateways into further studies. There is so much that can be done, everyone may already know some information that is relevant and no-one gets left behind. Almost any local topic can expand into a project. Studying the walls of a local church, for example, might lead into a study of how different phases of building can be worked out from examining masonry, the types and origin of building stone, links with other historic buildings nearby, the history of the church and area, influential families and any effects they might have had on the form and growth of the settlement. It does not have to be a church as many other historic buildings can lead you into all sorts of studies.

You and your members will probably have a good idea of what there is of interest in your area but you can probably find out a lot more. The availability of information can vary a bit between England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

One way of starting to look is with Ordnance Survey maps. For England, Scotland and Wales, you could get going by looking at the two Ordnance Survey (OS) maps “Ancient Britain” and “Roman Britain” which show major sites though they do not show everything and a lot of what is shown may be on private land or not visible on the ground. You could also search your local 1:50,000 (Landranger) or 1:25,000 (Explorer) OS maps for archaeological detail. These mark selected earthworks, Roman sites and roads, non-Roman sites, battlefields and a range of sites simply identified as “site of antiquity”. Larger-scale Explorer maps can show more archaeological detail than Landranger and may show, say, a deserted medieval village where a Landranger for the same area may not. If you know nothing about sites you find, putting the name (or, the name of a nearby village) into an internet search may yield results. OS maps are often held by local libraries or can be viewed on bing maps <http://www.bing.com/maps/> - click “OS” and put in the name of the nearest town or spin the mouse wheel on the map. OSNI produces 1:50,000 Discoverer maps for all of Northern Ireland, and 1:25,000 Activity maps for selected areas.

“Google Earth” can be very useful for looking down on the landscape from above and sometimes you may be able to see shapes or patterns in the fields. At <http://www.britainfromabove.org.uk/> you can see old aerial photos.

All counties / unitary authorities in the UK must have a Sites & Monuments Record (SMR) which lists and gives details of known archaeological features and historic monuments in their region though many of these might not be of interest to a U3A group. SMRs are being translated into Heritage Environment Records (HERs) though implementation of this varies between different regions of the UK and between the different authorities within those regions. You should be able to access the information but the type of access also varies. In searching for information and possible sites of interest you could try the following websites:



England

You could try Heritage Gateway www.heritagegateway.org.uk which aims to provide integrated access to heritage information. From this site, you can access the following datasets:

- **HER** for your own local authority (if you are lucky)

- **The National Heritage List for England (NHLE)** – all nationally designated heritage assets in England, including Listed Buildings and Scheduled Monuments
- **Images of England** – photographs of England's Listed Buildings
- **PastScape** – information about England's archaeological and architectural heritage
- **ViewFinder** – historic photographs of England
- **NMR Excavation Index** – archaeological excavations and interventions carried out in England
- **Parks & Gardens UK** - information on historic parks, gardens and designed landscapes

A very useful feature of Heritage Gateway is that often you can put in your own postcode and get information about what there is within 100 / 250 / 500 metres or 1 / 2 / 5 / 10 km of your house.

The English Heritage website <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/> lists its properties and also allows access to the NHLE. For National Trust properties / land in England, Wales and Northern Ireland see <http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/places/find-a-place-to-visit/?findPlace=&type=&view=map>.

The Portable Antiquities Scheme <http://finds.org.uk/> is a voluntary scheme to record archaeological objects found by members of the public in England and Wales. Their website provides information on finds, articles, events listings and access to their database of objects and images. You can search for information in their Database section eg by type, map or postcode. N.B. the website gives good information on the finds themselves but the sites where these were found frequently have nothing to see and may be on private land.

You could also try searching <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/>, the Archaeology Data Service, which has over 18,000 reports in its Grey Literature Library.

Wales

You could try: Coflein (RCAHMW / NMRW) <http://www.coflein.gov.uk/>;
CARN <http://www.rcahmw.gov.uk/HI/ENG/Search+Records/CARN/>;
CADW <http://cadw.wales.gov.uk/historicenvironment/?lang=en>;
National Museums of Wales <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/>;
Clwyd-Powys Archaeological Trust <http://www.cpat.org.uk/>;
Dyfed Archaeological Trust <http://www.dyfedarchaeology.org.uk/>;
Gwynedd Archaeological Trust <http://www.heneb.co.uk/>;
Glamorgan-Gwent Archaeological Trust <http://www.ggat.org.uk/>;
For all four archaeological trusts - Archwilio <http://www.archwilio.org.uk/>;
Portable Antiquities Scheme & National Trust – see websites above.



Scotland

ScARF, the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework at <http://www.scottishheritagehub.com/>. You could also try:
RCAHMS <http://www.rcahms.gov.uk/search.html>;
Canmore <http://canmore.rcahms.gov.uk/>;
National Collection of Aerial Photography <http://aerial.rcahms.gov.uk/worldwide/Scotland.php>;
Scotlands Places <http://www.scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/>;
Scran <http://www.scran.ac.uk/> (involves charges);
PASTMAP <http://pastmap.org.uk/>;
National Trust for Scotland <http://www.nts.org.uk/Visits/>;
Scottish Archaeology Internet Reports <http://www.sair.org.uk/>, or
through ADS at <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/sair/>;
Archaeology Scotland <http://www.archaeologyscotland.org.uk/>;
West of Scotland Archaeology Service <http://www.wosas.net/search.php>;
Historic Scotland at <http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/>.



For western Scotland, a good website is <http://www.wosas.net/news.html> from the West of Scotland Archaeology Service.

Two outstanding publications which will keep you well informed about what has been going on in British archaeology are “British Archaeology” (bi-monthly) published by the CBA (Council for British Archaeology) and “Current Archaeology” (monthly). They are both full of information and very colourful and well-produced. Current Archaeology also publishes “World Archaeology” (bi-monthly). These publications are very interesting and you can spend a lot of time reading them. Current Archaeology’s (<http://www.archaeology.co.uk/>) and the CBA’s (<http://new.archaeologyuk.org/>) are very interesting websites packed with information. Also, look out for links with Facebook and Twitter where there can be news updates.

The sadly missed and hugely successful “Time Team”, into its 20th series by 2013 and almost certainly responsible for playing a leading role in raising national interest in Archaeology, has a website presence <http://www.channel4.com/programmes/time-team> where archived programmes are available but you may have to register to watch them.

It is worth keeping an eye on the Portable Antiquities Scheme website (<http://finds.org.uk/>) which has a news section and is an interesting website.

The Museum of London <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/corporate/search-results?q=projects> site gives news of MOLA projects and London Archaeology and is well worth exploring. The website <http://news.nationalgeographic.co.uk/news/archives/ancient-world/> is an ancient news site from National Geographic.

Googling “archaeology news” brings up a collection of websites. News items can come from around the world. Some such sites may have a specific interest or regional focus.

If you want to find out about research which has been going on in your area, you could try the Archaeological Data Service website <http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/>. Note that this is quite an advanced website but contains a lot of information and can be searched in various ways. You could also try <http://www.biab.ac.uk/> British and Irish Archaeological Bibliography (biab online) for a list of research reports concerning your area. BIAB is a service of the CBA and exists to support research work of all kinds. Be prepared for some of the reports it lists being unpublished or difficult to obtain. You might find Win Scutt’s website <http://www.archaeology.ws/worldarchnews.html> of interest and Mike Pitts’ website / blog <http://mikepitts.wordpress.com/> always makes stimulating reading.

Don’t forget to check your local council website for planning applications. This may sound a bit boring but it will keep you up to date with building etc developments which are going on in your area and which you might be interested in knowing about. They may come along with archaeological assessments, reports and maps which you can study and which may be a source of local archaeological information for you.

13. DVDs at home

You could use DVDs borrowed from the U3A as part of a study. The U3A national Resource Centre is based in Bromley, Kent. It is worth checking it to see if it has anything you can use. You will need to plan ahead to allow time for registering with the U3A, registering with the Resource Centre and the ordering and postage of your item. The Third Age Trust website is <http://www.u3a.org.uk/>. You are probably already registered with this website as you are reading this downloaded leaflet but, if not, go to [Create Account](#) to register. Once you have been registered, log in at [Member Login](#) which brings up the members’ area and of the 10 boxes coming up, the first one is [Resource Centre](#).

Go into this and right at the top of the page you will see General search term ... enter here. Type Archaeology over it and when you have both Archaeology and Basic Search showing click the green & white button to Go. This should bring up a list of 10 items. Hovering over each will give you details. Click the blue and white right button at the top to take you to the next set of 10 items ... and so on up to 125 or so. DVDs have the disk icon.

To order, you will have to register with the Resource Centre – click Register at top right of page. Once you receive your registration number, follow all the instructions on the main page.

You can order online (as above), by email (resource.centre@u3a.org.uk), by telephone (0208 315 0199 9.30am-4pm, Monday–Thursday) or by letter to Resource Centre, The Third Age Trust, 19, East street, Bromley BR1 1QE. You must order in advance (at least 2 weeks is advised) and pay return



postage. Showing a DVD and following it with discussion can be an effective approach, particularly where this may be a variation from how your sessions normally run.

14. Finding a project

It can be a good idea to find a project for your group to do. This could occupy several meetings. The problem is not likely to be in finding one to do but rather in trying to choose between several which all look interesting. Your project could probably come from just about anything you are studying. Projects provide opportunities for everyone to get actively involved in doing things, for getting out and about and for a lot of discussion. These are all things that U3A members enjoy doing. One *caveat* is to remember that your members are likely to have differing levels of research experience, ability and confidence and no-one should find herself or himself in the position of feeling they are not up to a particular task. Ways around this include taking care in how it is decided who does what, pairing people up and giving discreet help and tips to someone to get them going.

Sometimes, you can get so deeply into a project it just seems to keep on expanding. This is when you will have to consider putting a time-limit on it. Also, you may not want to lose group members who might get fed up with it!

15. Linking up

If you have other U3A groups in your area, contact them to see if they have Archaeology groups. If they do, it is worth meeting up with individual group leaders. This can lead to a sharing of ideas and suggestions about sites which benefits all concerned. It may also result in joint activities. In your own U3A, you may have members of your group who are also members of local history or family history groups. The knowledge and experience in these groups may well prove to be of value in some of your studies where areas overlap. You can search for nearby U3As by using the national website <http://www.u3a.org.uk/> and going to Find a U3A, Search by Post Code and putting in your own post code to search the surrounding 20 km. Alternatively, put in the names of nearby towns for the search or select View a map of all UK U3As and enlarge it for your area.

You could also contact a local archaeological society. If you and your members do not know of one, ask at the local museum or library or search online. One source of information on this and many other aspects of Archaeology is the Council for British Archaeology (CBA). Their website (<http://new.archaeologyuk.org/>) lists local societies at <http://www.archaeologyuk.org/archonline> – go to Regional and Local Societies but N.B. these are listed alphabetically rather than by area.



Another route is to go to <http://www.torc.org.uk/>, put in your postcode, select the distance and search. This will bring up a list which should include local archaeological groups and you can click this

for contact information. Or, at <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/caf/wikka.php?wakka=RegionsCategory> you should find the regions of the CBA's Community Archaeology Forum and clicking the appropriate region takes you to a list of counties where you can see what is being organised by community and local groups in your county. Another way of finding societies is through the Current Archaeology website, "join-in" section at <http://www.archaeology.co.uk/category/join-in/local-societies>. Information on some groups in London, by borough, can be found on the Museum of London website at <http://www.museumoflondon.org.uk/collections-research/laarc/archaeology-london/>.

Societies do not always update the information they send in and some websites change so, once you have found the name of a local group, you may have to google it to get current contact details.

16. Getting a speaker

You could consider getting a speaker in to talk to your group. If you do this, you will need to sort out how many people you think you can get to come, whether the talk will be in the day or evening, where it will be held, what facilities you will need and how much you will charge. A charge may be necessary to cover the hire of a hall and the speaker's expenses. Nearby archaeology group members may be interested in coming and a notice or announcement at your own U3A may pull in other people. You could also let local archaeology and historical societies know as some of their members might be interested. Before you do any of this, of course, you need to find a speaker. Your members may know of someone or a local find in the news or a Dig that has been going on not too far away could throw up a range of possible speakers. Some museum staff and local government officers with archaeological responsibilities will do talks and, if your local Finds Liaison Officer from the Portable Antiquities Scheme is not too far away, why not ask her / him? It is also possible that if you approach some of these people they may have suggestions of other speakers for you, even if they cannot do a talk themselves. Local archaeological and historical societies may be able to provide a speaker or, as they may often get in speakers themselves, give you a list of people you could approach. And, with such societies, why not think about going along to some of their talks?

17. Interesting landscapes

One approach you could use in finding topics is to look at particular landscape areas with concentrations of sites. Check the UNESCO World Heritage Site List <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list>. There are at least six World Heritage Sites in the British Isles which might be of interest. These are:

Stonehenge, Avebury and Associated Sites: Stonehenge, The Avenue, Durrington Walls, Woodhenge, burial mounds, cursuses; Avebury, Windmill Hill, West Kennet Long Barrow, The Sanctuary, Silbury Hill, West Kennet and Beckhampton Avenues, West Kennet Palisaded Enclosures, barrows.

Frontiers of the Roman Empire (UK): Hadrian's Wall, the Antonine Wall and associated structures.

Heart of Neolithic Orkney: Maes Howe, Stones of Stenness, Ring & Ness of Brodgar, Skara Brae and other burial, ceremonial and settlement sites.

Blaenavon Industrial Landscape: Coal and ore mines, quarries, railway systems, furnaces, workers' homes, linked to the pre-eminence of South Wales as the world's major producer of iron and coal in the 19th century.

Derwent Valley Mills: The 18th and 19th centuries' industrial landscape of the Derwent valley.

Archaeological Ensemble of the Bend of the Boyne: Europe's largest and most important concentration of prehistoric megalithic art including Brú na Bóinne, Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth.

Beyond the British Isles there are many more e.g. Prehistoric Sites and Decorated Caves of the Vézère valley, France; Archaeological Areas of Pompeii, Herculaneum and Torre Annunziata, Italy;

Megalithic Temples of Malta and Gozo; Ancient Thebes with its Necropolis, Egypt; Memphis and its Necropolis – the Pyramid Fields from Giza to Darshur, Egypt; Fossil Hominid Sites of Sterkfontein, Swartkrans, Kromdraai and Environs, South Africa; Lines and Geoglyphs of Nasca and Pampas de Jumana, Peru.

18. Famous cities

Your group might be interested in famous ancient cities with their associated buildings, structures and regions. Examples might include Rome, Athens, Troy, Angkor, Persepolis, Petra, Carthage, Palmyra, Sigiriya, Machu Picchu, Moenjodaro. These may also be wholly or partly World Heritage sites, see <http://whc.unesco.org/en/list>. They could be studied in all sorts of ways e.g. through maps, aerial photographs, excavation reports, standing buildings and monuments, finds, reconstructions and what is known about their links to other cities, trade and culture. Historic towns and cities in the UK could also be studied, such as the one nearest to you.

19. Systematic studies

You may have other ideas about what your Archaeology group could do and may have decided a more systematic study of the subject is what would be appropriate. This might include studying archaeological techniques, remains, materials or period studies.

Techniques such as fieldwalking, aerial photography, geophysical surveying, excavation and dating could be looked at and their significance in Archaeology assessed.

A study of archaeological remains could look at the settings in which archaeological finds are discovered such as hoards, burials, middens, caves, production sites and waterlogged sites. Local or regional examples could be referred to.

Materials could include textiles, leather, salt, wood, bone, flint, metal, glass and pottery. Studies of these could look at techniques and forms, again linking with local examples where possible. Study of some of the materials e.g. pottery could probably expand a lot if your group found a particular interest there.

Another approach might be to choose a period or “age” to study. It might be something particularly relevant to your area and it would certainly give you quite a choice ... from the Palaeolithic, Mesolithic or Neolithic periods, Bronze or Iron Ages, Roman, Anglo-Saxon, Medieval, Post-Medieval or Modern periods. You could look at, for example, the materials and forms of finds, monuments, burial practices, chronology and particular sites. If local examples exist, these could be used as case studies.

As group leader, you are likely to be the group’s facilitator, organising and enabling these studies. You may also be quite happy to take on the role of its teacher but if this is not what you intend it might be an idea to make it clear from the start that this will be collaborative learning where everyone shares in preparing and presenting learning materials.

20. Learning more

Your group will already be studying archaeology in its own way and there is no need for anyone to go further than your own tasks and projects. However, if someone did want to go further there are various things they could consider.

A lot of information about Archaeology can be obtained from websites e.g. CBA, Current Archaeology and PAS websites (see 12, above) already mentioned. You could also check <http://www.spoilheap.co.uk/resources.html>. The major broadcasters’ websites are well worth looking at eg BBC <http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ancient/archaeology/>. For History, you could try British History Online www.british-history.ac.uk. The Victoria County History website will tell you

how much of your county they have covered (www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk). For a narrow focus, you could just google with key words or phrases, but always critically and very aware that many sites are not authoritative nor the information necessarily validated.

There are many excellent books on Archaeology. It is best to browse or borrow before buying so that you can find the particular book which is right for you. Out of a choice of many, two possibilities worth looking at are “Archaeology: An Introduction” by Kevin Greene & Tom Moore, Routledge, 5th Edition, 2010, and “The Handbook of British Archaeology” by Roy Adkins, Lesley Adkins & Victoria Leitch, Constable, 2008.

There may be local authority adult education courses in your area but they may not have age-related concessionary rates. Check also the WEA (Workers’ Educational Association), a national charity and the UK’s largest voluntary provider of adult education. You can search for courses on your regional WEA website or on the national one (<http://www.wea.org.uk/local>).

An alternative to an evening class is a distance learning course done over the internet. There are not yet as many of these about as might be expected but online Archaeology courses are done by Exeter University (http://education.exeter.ac.uk/dll/list_courses.php?code=dla) and the costs compare with some local authority courses of similar duration. The Exeter online courses have no exam to take. Check also <http://www3.open.ac.uk/study/undergraduate/course/A251.htm>, Open University; <http://www.conted.ox.ac.uk/courses/results.php?Category=100#rightcontent>, University of Oxford Department of Continuing Education; University of Cambridge Institute of Continuing Education <http://www.ice.cam.ac.uk/component/courses/?view=results&q=Archaeology>.

If anyone was really ambitious, they might want to study online for an archaeology qualification. Leicester University does a distance learning Certificate (1 year), Diploma (2 years) and BA degree (3 years) in Archaeology. Details at <http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/archaeology>.

GETTING OUT

21. First trip



It can be a good idea to get out and about as soon as possible. A good first trip is to visit a local landmark such as a ruined castle, earthworks etc. This will probably be somewhere well known by your members and the trick is to get them asking all sorts of questions during their visit so that they will spot things they never noticed before. It might also lead on to a research project about the site, the studying of excavation and other reports and looking at the whole period during which the monument was constructed.

This first trip is a good opportunity for the group to gel but you will need to prepare for it and should do a pilot visit before the group goes there. It is important to pay close attention to the needs of your Group and possible risks, hazards and dangers which might be encountered. You do not have to go overboard with this but you should adopt a sensible approach and consider at the very least ...

- Parking – Adequate? / Safe route to walk from car park to event?
- Toilets – Are there some? Will they be unlocked and available? / If not, where?
- Refreshments – Is there somewhere people can obtain a drink and food?
- Terrain – Is the planned route on even, firm ground?
- Obstacles/hazards – Anything potentially dangerous/challenging? (eg ditches, stiles, roads)
- Clothing – Special clothing etc needed? (eg waterproofs, particular footwear)

Your planned visit / event / route should be within the competency of every member of your Group who wishes to participate – if it is not, you should consider adjusting it so that it is. You must make sure you let all your members know the above details, that you personally carry with you a list of

members and their emergency (ICE) phone numbers, that you have access to a charged mobile phone and know whether a signal can be received at your destination. It is as well to have an Accident Report Form with you, just in case. You must check whether your U3A has any guidance on trips out and adhere to it.

22. More trips



Generally, U3A members like going out on trips so why not have more? Visits can be arranged to publicly open sites, perhaps involving a half-day or day out. It might be possible to visit more than one site in a day. If you were really ambitious, you could consider short holidays away where you visited several. There are many famous sites in the UK but



also many less well known where there is much to learn. As with any trip, you would have to check parking, toilet and refreshment facilities, possible accessibility issues or difficult terrain, entrance costs and opening times. It is always best to book your visit well ahead. When you do this, make sure you say you are a U3A group. You may get a significant discount or there may be no charge at all.

23. Local museum



You and your members probably know it well but why not organise a trip to your local museum? It is best not to just drop in but contact them to arrange a proper visit. You might even get a tour and if you expressed a particular interest beforehand (eg "Iron Age finds") they might even put out a special selection for you to look at.



With any visit, always make it clear you are a U3A group. Museums will sometimes arrange study sessions for a nominal charge per head but this is not always publicised so it is always worth asking. As well as the museum, it is worth looking out for small local heritage centres which can display material which may be of interest to your group.

24. More museums

Visits to bigger museums may involve travelling further and spending more time out but they are generally always worth it, as long as you have done your homework. They usually have detailed websites from which you can find out most of what you need to know e.g. opening hours, toilets & restaurants, major collections. If you have not arranged a trip like this before, it is worth speaking to the leader of one of the groups in your U3A that regularly does visits out and from them you may be able to find out the best times of trains etc. and any particular travel ticket deals that can apply. Where free travel is not applicable, a lot of U3A groups like to travel off-peak and timings need to be carefully worked out. A pilot visit is always worth doing – you may discover your estimated timings are out, a famous display you wanted to see is away on tour, or simply that you had forgotten to include a "shopping time" slot in your original calculations!

Big museums can display so much it is often a good idea to focus in on particular areas of the museum but people will also welcome the opportunity for a bit of wandering about. Doing your research should include finding out what else there may be that is close to your big museum. In London, for instance, the very well-known British Museum has stunning archaeology displays but just 6 minutes' walk away is the brilliant but generally less well-known Petrie Museum.

Specialist museums are often smaller, some very small, and these are scattered all over Britain. Examples include <http://www.ucl.ac.uk/museums/petrie> Petrie Museum of Egyptian Archaeology (London), Museum of the Iron Age (Andover) <http://www3.hants.gov.uk/museum-of-the-ironage>,

National Roman Legion Museum (Caerleon) <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/roman/>, Roman Army Museum (nr Haltwhistle) <http://www.vindolanda.co.uk> and the little Groam House Museum (Rosemarkie nr Inverness – Pictish) <http://www.groamhouse.org.uk/>. Some specialist museums are very small indeed and may consist of displays on just one floor of a building.

Some specialist museums are display / interpretive centres based around a particular excavation where walking around the site will be part of the visit e.g. Flag Fen Archaeology Park (near Peterborough) <http://www.vivacity-peterborough.com/museums-and-heritage/flag-fen/>, Skara Brae http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/propertyresults/propertyoverview.htm?PropID=PL_244 and <http://www.orkneyjar.com/history/skarabrae/>, Lullingstone Roman Villa <http://www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/lullingstone-roman-villa/>.



Open air museums may recreate crafts and activities, dwellings, farms and even villages eg Weald and Downland Museum (nr Chichester), <http://www.wealddown.co.uk/>, Butser Ancient Farm (nr Petersfield) <http://www.butserancientfarm.co.uk/>, West Stow Anglo-Saxon village (nr Bury St Edmunds) <http://www.stedmundsbury.gov.uk/weststow/>, St Fagans National Museum (Museum of Welsh Life, near to Cardiff) <http://www.museumwales.ac.uk/en/stfagans/>, Scottish Crannog Centre <http://www.crannog.co.uk/>, Castell Henllys Iron Age Hillfort <http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/default.asp?PID=261>.

As with local museums, it is a good idea to let a big or specialist museum know in advance that your group is coming as this can be of help to both them and you.

25. Record Office

Your local Record Office should have a wealth of information about your area such as past editions of Ordnance Survey maps, old documents, estate maps, tithe maps and lots of books. If you have never visited it, it would be worth going, with ID. Your U3A history / family history groups may know it well. As with visiting a museum, it is best not just to drop in but contact them to arrange a proper visit. This way, you might be lucky enough to get a conducted tour and a “behind-the-scenes” look at what goes on there and the records that they hold. If you specify the particular area in which you are interested (town, village etc.) they may even be able to put out examples of material relating to this. If they have a website, check it as they may also do talks, walks, activities or have displays which may be of interest to your group. If you get going on a local project, you may well be returning here.

26. Festival fare

Check what is going on locally during the Festival of British Archaeology, co-ordinated by the CBA and held each summer, usually in the last 2 weeks in July (2014 dates: Sat 12.07.2013 – Sun 27.07.2013). Each year across the UK, many special events are organised and held by museums, local societies, national and countryside parks, universities, and heritage organisations. Events vary from area to area but can include excavation open days and behind-the-scenes tours to family fun days, hands-on activities, guided walks, talks and finds identification workshops. You can find out what is going on in your area by accessing <http://festival.britarch.ac.uk/> from Spring onwards or by internet searching. The CBA keeps the website regularly updated and produces a booklet nearer to the dates but please remember their information is only as good as what they receive and you may find there is more going on locally than you realise so it is best to keep checking the website, including right up until the last minute. For other events etc, see <http://www.archaeologyuk.org/briefing>. September is Scottish Archaeology Month, with many different events taking place.



27. Sharing Learning

A Shared Learning Project is a project shared between a U3A (usually more than one) and an institution such as a museum, library or stately home, or it may just be between two or more U3As. It is often a research project or scheme which would not otherwise get done. The project ends with a verbal presentation and production of a written or other formal record. SLPs have been going since 2002. Those linked to Archaeology have included object research and gallery evaluation at the British Museum, the cataloguing and repacking of finds at LAARC (London Archaeological Archive Research Centre, part of Museum of London), handling and packing artefacts at Colchester Castle Museum and experimental archaeology and researching the lives of two pioneering female archaeologists at the Petrie Museum. Information on planned SLPs is circulated from the national office to U3As as well as being easily accessible on the website. It is worthwhile keeping an eye open to see what is in the offing. If nothing appeals to you, why not consider starting your own? For information on SLPs go to <http://www.u3a.org.uk/>, log in, [Learn the U3A Way](#), [Sub-categories](#), [Shared Learning Projects](#) and check [Past SLPs-In London](#) and [Past SLPs-Outside London](#) to see the wide range of topics that can be covered.



28. Getting dirty

Is anyone in your group interested in practical work? Do any individual members want to dig? If they do, they could look into finding and joining an organised excavation eg through Current Archaeology's website <http://www.archaeology.co.uk/category/digging/fieldwork>, or the CBA's <http://www.britarch.ac.uk/caf/wikka.php?wakka=RegionsCategory> Community Archaeology Forum. Some excavations are geared to training people with little or no experience or will include beginners eg they could check <http://www.kafs.co.uk/courses.aspx>, <http://www.sharp.org.uk/courses.html> or <http://www.reading.ac.uk/silchester/field-school/sil-fs-about.aspx>, about courses in Kent, Norfolk and Berkshire respectively. For most participants, of course, such courses will also involve a week or more's accommodation and will need to be budgeted for accordingly. The very famous Vindolanda, one of Europe's most important Roman archaeological sites, will accept volunteers with no previous experience but competition for places is very intense and the second the booking site goes live (at 12.00 noon on 1st November) the dig-only places go with unbelievable speed. For details see <http://www.vindolanda.com/excavate.htm>. Archaeology for Communities in the Highlands (ARCH) <http://www.archhighland.org.uk/> runs heritage projects for people across the Highlands of Scotland. For excavations abroad, you could subscribe to <http://www.archaeology.co.uk/join-in/national-bodies/Archaeology-Abroad.htm>. Joining your local archaeological society (if they dig) could open up the possibility of excavation as could joining a community archaeology project if there is one near to you. If excavation is a bit too practical, either of these may offer the possibility of fieldwalking.

What about activities for the whole group? Would you as group leader consider involving the group in practical work? Fieldwalking, mentioned above, might be one possibility, with a local society or project. Finds are picked up from the surface of the soil working within a carefully marked out grid and recorded. This is unlikely to affect any stratigraphy as it should be done on soil that has been turned over by the plough and subsequently harrowed and therefore already disturbed. It can only be done at certain times of year, when the soil is bare, and with the landowner's permission. As far as excavation is concerned, you might be able to set up contacts with a local amateur archaeological society / group and see if it is possible to arrange a visit to their site when they are excavating (but note that not all such societies excavate). Remember that many excavations take place in the summer, often beginning earlier, so start approaching them at the right time of year. If you are lucky, they might be prepared to allow your group members to do some supervised trowelling or cleaning. You would need to ensure health and safety procedures were known and being followed.

Many group leaders will rule excavation out right from the start but if you are thinking of doing your own group excavation there are three issues you need to take on board straight away:

- **Excavation is physically demanding.** It can involve physical exertion in cramped or uncomfortable conditions over a relatively long period of time in unfavourable weather with primitive comfort facilities and ending up in finding nothing exciting.
- **It is imperative you know what you are doing.** This means it is best to go somewhere where you can be taught properly how to do things but if you want to hold your own dig, this should only be done under the direction of a qualified archaeologist or suitably experienced officer from a reputable local archaeological society.
- **Excavation is much more than just digging a hole.** Digging should be preceded by careful research and planning and followed by post-excavation work on the finds. During the dig, each context (eg layer, cut, fill or masonry feature) should be carefully investigated and recorded on context recording sheets with finds being cleaned and stored with site and context reference numbers. You need a place where digging is permitted, you need tools to be able to do it and enough time and people to be able to complete what you start.

However, if you can get hold of an experienced archaeologist to help you, you might consider a dig. There is always the risk of damaging a new, unknown site, so digging is probably best done in a



private garden and should only be a metre square pit. Here, you will have the landowner's permission, be away from public access, have appropriate comfort facilities and be working on disturbed ground where major new sites are relatively unlikely to occur, particularly as your site may be decided by which bit of lawn can get cut into rather than a geophysical survey. That said, many unsuspected structures and interesting artefacts have been found in gardens, so – you never know. You must plan and go about your Dig very carefully and be guided by your expert adviser. Health and safety issues must be addressed and all members must be made aware of their insurance position. Those who want to or are able to can do the digging, those not so inclined can do cleaning or recording. The aim of your dig is likely to be to learn techniques of archaeological investigation and processing, to gather data or to attempt to answer a particular question about the site and never to “hunt for treasure”. You should always remember that digging destroys the structure of the ground. If you come across a significant buried feature you should stop work and seek advice. If you think you have found a valuable or rare artefact, contact your local Finds Liaison

Officer through the Portable Antiquities Scheme. If you find bones and suspect they may be human, stop immediately and contact the police. What you do should always be as guided by your expert advisor but always allow at least 2-3 days to complete a 1 metre square test pit, make sure you have enough people who will turn up and that you have reserve dates in case of really bad weather. You should also bear in mind that excavation can be energetic work and we are none of us young.



As well as your research into the proposed site (including checking the SMR / HER), background reading could include BAJR Guide 30 <http://www.scribd.com/doc/24518346/30-BAJR-Guide-Work->

[Safe-on-Public-Archaeology-Projects-General-Guidance](#), a good archaeological handbook, WYAAS Guides 5, 6 & 13 <http://www.archaeology.wyjs.org.uk/wyjs-archaeology-guidance-notes.asp>.

Your finds may not be earth-shattering but they will probably be interesting and your members will appreciate having been given the opportunity to dig. After the dig, finds processing, drawing and writing up can provide interesting learning experiences and pose questions which can lead on to further research. Digging can be very rewarding but it cannot be stressed too much that if you carry out your own dig you should only do it where permission and expert guidance have been obtained



29. Checking courses

Check the national website to see if there are any courses of interest. Each summer there are 2 national summer schools with a choice from about 12 different subjects. Information on these should go out in November for the following year and can be found on the national website <http://www.u3a.org.uk/> (log in) [Events and Competitions](#), [Summer Schools](#). Check also the different regions to see if there are any regional seasonal events or study days – see <http://www.u3a.org.uk/> (log in) [Regions](#), (then check by region). The different U3A regions can vary quite a lot in what they offer. North West Region runs a residential Summer School currently at Newton Rigg College,



Penrith. In 2014, the courses include “Reconstructing the Past: An Introduction to Prehistoric Archaeology”. See <http://www.u3a.org.uk/> (log in) [Regions](#), [NORTH WEST](#), [NORTH WEST REGION OF U3As](#), [Events](#), [Summer Schools](#).

30. Having a holiday

You could consider going on a non-digging archaeological holiday. Once you have decided the destination you are interested in, googling or checking for advertisements in archaeological periodicals may bring up names of companies that seem to provide what you are after. Careful scrutiny of what is offered and comparison between competitors is advisable, as well as checking how well protected the company is and how safe the destination. Many travel companies have long



included ancient sites as some of their major destinations and companies such as Cox & Kings, Page & Moy and Saga include archaeology-themed holidays in what they offer. Some companies may specialise in archaeological tours eg Andante Travels, Peter Sommer Travels, Martin Randall, Responsible Travel and there is a range of much smaller companies eg Orkney Archaeology Tours, Scilly Walks, Archaeotours which offer small group holidays within the British Isles. These holidays are generally tours. Many of the companies offering special interest holidays may be able to do a tailor-made holiday for you if you are able to get a group together.

It must be stressed that the above is just a list of some companies offering this sort of holiday and should on no account be taken as a recommendation, nor should any inference be made regarding any companies not mentioned.

Disclaimer / feedback

Please note that all of the above is written by a keen amateur archaeologist with, however, no archaeological qualifications nor professional experience and is presented as a series of suggestions for group leaders to consider along with information from other sources before making their own decisions. No responsibility can be accepted for the content or advice contained herein. Websites listed may be subject to change. This website entry can be improved through your corrections and suggested additions which will be welcome.

Ian Haynes, January 2014.