

# Council for British Archaeology

## CBA Factsheet 2: Get involved in archaeology

**You may have watched Time Team or Indiana Jones, or seen an archaeological excavation taking place close to where you live, but how do you get involved?**

This factsheet will help you do just that. Perhaps you want to dig on an archaeological site, or do some metal detecting, or maybe you are looking for an evening class where you can study Prehistoric or Roman Britain, or the archaeology of your local region?

Across the UK there are regional community groups undertaking practical fieldwork; there are colleges and universities offering part-time courses – all of whom are keen to hear from you.

It doesn't matter where you live or what age you are, the archaeology of the UK is for everyone to share in. Use these pages to help guide you in the right direction.

**Can I get involved with archaeology without having a career as an archaeologist?**

Yes! Archaeology provides a fascinating and life-long pastime, and lots of important work is done by people working in their spare time. There are many local and national societies which hold lectures, publish newsletters and journals, visit sites and conduct their own archaeological fieldwork. You can find a list of these societies in the Archaeology Online section of our website ([www.britarch.ac.uk/archonline](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/archonline)). Community archaeology groups are playing an increasingly important role in the study of their local area. Community archaeology is one of the main growth areas within archaeological research today with many of the groups producing high-quality work which is increasingly seeing them invited to undertake paid professional excavations. Follow the link on our website for more information, [www.britarch.ac.uk/getinvolved/community](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/getinvolved/community)

Why not search the TORC website ([www.torc.org.uk/orgsearch.asp](http://www.torc.org.uk/orgsearch.asp)) to find your nearest group? Local libraries also often have information on how to get in touch with groups. The CBA also has the Community Archaeology Forum ([www.britarch.ac.uk/caf](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/caf)), a website designed to publicise the work of these groups and help others to discover what groups exist and how to contact them.

## How can I get started in archaeology?

If you've got this far, the chance is you've already seen Channel 4's Time Team ([www.channel4.com/timeteam](http://www.channel4.com/timeteam)), so you already have an idea of what constitutes archaeology and the options it gives you, and what you might like to do. Your local library will most likely have a selection of books on the subject. Visit some of the museums and archaeological sites in your area: apart from their archaeological displays, they often have introductory information, publications, and details of events.

Remember, too, that there are other ways of developing your interest: for example, through evening classes or day schools run by the WEA ([www.wea.org.uk](http://www.wea.org.uk)), University of the Third Age ([www.u3a.org.uk](http://www.u3a.org.uk)) or university adult continuing education centres ([www.britarch.ac.uk/education/conted/departments](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/education/conted/departments)).

Many of the latter offer the chance to study part-time for qualifications such as the Certificate of Archaeology, part of the Open Studies programme which requires no previous background knowledge or qualifications. An AS/A level archaeology course is also available in some parts of the country. The education section of our website has up-to-date information on the availability of AS/A level archaeology courses in your area.

## Volunteering in archaeology

There are many opportunities to volunteer in archaeology throughout the UK. The voluntary sector consists of a large, varied and often highly motivated body of people who undertake considerable research into the historic environment. The following list will point you in some useful directions if you would like to do some volunteering. Volunteer groups are sometimes referred to as 'community archaeology' groups, as mentioned above.

- The CBA welcomes and values the support of volunteers: visit the volunteers section of our website ([www.britarch.ac.uk/cba/volunteer](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/cba/volunteer)) for some options on volunteering for the CBA.
- Some commercial archaeological companies and units will accept volunteers and this can provide a great opportunity to work alongside and learn from a team of professional archaeologists. However, many units are reluctant to take volunteers due to health and safety concerns, and because the fast-pace and short-term nature of much commercial work may not suit the needs of a volunteer. Visit the Archaeology Online ([www.britarch.ac.uk/archonline](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/archonline)) section of our website for a list of archaeological companies and contractors which you could contact.

Many volunteers develop their skills and interest to the extent that they would like to seek formal education and a job in archaeology. Take a look at our Education and Teaching factsheets for further information on studying or obtaining a career in Archaeology.

### **Going on a dig**

If you are under 16 and would like go on an excavation (a 'dig'), this can sometimes be difficult for practical and insurance reasons. However, there are various things you could try. Many local archaeology societies and groups welcome young people along and may have field projects which you can get involved in. Visit the Archaeology Online section of our website ([www.britarch.ac.uk/archonline](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/archonline)) for a list of local groups and societies.

Some archaeological companies have open days and special events throughout the year where you can get involved in what they are doing. The Archaeology Online section also has a list of commercial archaeological companies or 'units' – it would be worth contacting some in your local area and keeping an eye on their websites to see if they have events coming up. The CBA's Briefing service also contains lots of events, digs and open days, so keep checking this page to see what may be coming up near you: [www.britarch.ac.uk/briefing](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/briefing)

### **Festival of British Archaeology**

The Festival of British Archaeology (formerly National Archaeology Week) involves many hundreds of different excavation open days, guided walks, specialist talks, hands-on activities, family fun days, finds identification days and much more every summer. To see what activities are taking place in your area, visit (<http://festival.britarch.ac.uk>). You will also find details here of other festivals around the UK, such as Scottish Archaeology Month and Archaeology Days (in Northern Ireland).

### **How can I find out more?**

A good source of information about the archaeology of this country is *British Archaeology* (BA) magazine published six times a year by the CBA ([www.britarch.ac.uk/ba](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/ba)). The CBA produces CBA Briefing, published within BA and online, which includes information on excavations and other fieldwork projects, forthcoming conferences, lectures and other archaeological events relevant to all those interested in the subject. Contact us to answer queries regarding archaeological careers and education, and many other matters. We also publish a series of archaeological handbooks aimed at those for whom archaeology is a part-time activity, but who are interested in training and learning skills to undertake practical work.

Below are listed a selection of useful organisations for finding out more:

### **Institute for Archaeologists (IfA)**

The Institute for Archaeologists (which recently changed its name from the Institute of Field Archaeologists) is the professional body for archaeology. Professional archaeologists are corporate members of the institute, although student and affiliate membership is available for those studying or just interested in archaeology.

IfA, SHES, Whiteknights, University of Reading, PO Box 227, Reading RG6 6AB, tel 0118 378 6446, [www.archaeologists.net](http://www.archaeologists.net)

### **The Nautical Archaeology Society**

For those of you with an interest in maritime or underwater archaeology, the NAS is the place to contact. They have a central base in Portsmouth but they also have some regional offices. As well as membership and a quarterly journal they also offer training courses for both beginners and the more experienced in working with nautical archaeology.

[www.nasportsmouth.org.uk](http://www.nasportsmouth.org.uk)

### **The Museums Association**

The Museums Association, 24 Calvin Street, London EW1 6NW, tel 020 7426 6910, [www.museumsassociation.org](http://www.museumsassociation.org)

### **Archaeology Abroad**

Archaeology Abroad provides information about archaeological excavation and fieldschool opportunities outside the UK suitable for all pockets and levels of experience. The Archaeology Abroad bulletin is published annually in spring on CD-ROM, an interactive format which enables readers to access additional information about projects and other information listed via email and web links, keeping subscribers fully up-to-date with all the latest opportunities.

An annual subscription can be obtained from the Honorary Secretary, Archaeology Abroad, 31–34 Gordon Square, London WC1H 0PY, or via the CBA Online Shop at: [www.britarch.ac.uk/shop](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/shop), email [arch.abroad@ucl.ac.uk](mailto:arch.abroad@ucl.ac.uk), web [www.britarch.ac.uk/archabroad](http://www.britarch.ac.uk/archabroad)

### **Archaeological Fieldwork Opportunities Bulletin**

The Archaeological Institute of America annual bulletin of worldwide archaeological fieldwork opportunities is also searchable online at [www.archaeological.org](http://www.archaeological.org)

**Other useful sources of information about archaeology include:**

- Current Archaeology – a popular monthly magazine covering many aspects of archaeology. For details contact: 9 Nassington Road, London NW3 2TX, tel 020 7435 7517, web [www.archaeology.co.uk](http://www.archaeology.co.uk).
- Prospects – the UK Graduate Careers Service, [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk)
- Past Horizons – information for volunteer archaeology fieldwork around the world, web [www.pasthorizons.com](http://www.pasthorizons.com)

**For further information, please contact:**

Council for British Archaeology, Beatrice De Cardi House, 66 Bootham, York, YO30 7BZ ,  
tel 01904 671417, visit [www.britarch.ac.uk](http://www.britarch.ac.uk) or email [info@britarch.ac.uk](mailto:info@britarch.ac.uk)

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