

The Sedgeford Historical and Archaeological Research Project



Basic Excavation and Recording Techniques (BERT)

Introduction

The Basic Excavation and Recording Techniques (BERT) course is designed for people with only a little or no experience of archaeology, catering for a range of people from those with an interest in archaeology as a hobby or students studying (or about to study) at degree level. On the course you will be taught how and why we do archaeology and how to excavate and record using the relevant tools. During the week you will get a mix of theory sessions and practical work, however most of the course is practical and will have you excavating on a real working trench – we don't use training trenches!

BERT is a **six-day** intensive course, **beginning on Sunday and ending on Friday**.

Participants will only pass the course if they shown that they have understood the archaeological theory provided during the course and have actively participated in the different techniques mentioned below.

We know that sometimes plans change, things can happen or life can get in the way, if you need to miss part of the course you must contact bookings@sharp.org.uk asap, or your BERT tutors if during the week. To pass the course you must have also done at least five days of the course as we believe that participants need physical experience that is built up during this time and allows you to demonstrate your understanding. We may be able to arrange for any missed time to be done another week (depending on circumstances and team availability).

Anyone that we feel has not passed the course will be welcome to attend during another week (either that season or another year), at the volunteer rate, and will receive their certificate when they have fulfilled the above criteria.

Certificates are given to those that pass the course.

What will be covered during the course

What is Archaeology and SHARP

Health and Safety in Archaeology

Theory of archaeological method, key terms

Site formation, and interpretation including Harris Matrix

Use of archaeological tools

Excavation techniques

Surveying techniques

Recording techniques (drawing, photography and paperwork)

Finds cleaning, recording and illustration

Environmental archaeology

BERT Handbook

Each participant will be given a physical copy of the BERT handbook on arrival on site. This can also be sent as a digital copy after the course if requested once the digging season has finished, by requesting it via bookings@sharp.org.uk.

What to bring

During your week you will need a few pieces of equipment. We recommend that people bring their own, as supervisors are discouraged from lending their personal equipment, so please don't ask them. Please make sure you add something to identify your trowel and equipment, your name in SHARPIE or gaffer tape etc would usually work, as there could be up to 10 similar ones on site, so in these cases it can be difficult to return a lost trowel to its rightful owner.

If you want to purchase any of these the best online retailer is past horizons <https://pasthorizons.com/>, although we also have some to purchase in our visitor centre (indicated with a *). SHARP has a limited selection of tools it can loan out, to those that forget or are struggling to afford their own.

4" WHS pointing/archaeologists trowel*

Drawing kit:

6H and 4H pencils*

Pencil sharpener*

Eraser*

Bulldog clips*

Two tape measures (minimum length 3m)*

Line level*

Sharpies*

Black biro pens*

Water bottle

Brimmed sun hat (no baseball caps)

Steel toe-capped boots

Sun cream

Waterproofs

A sturdy bag/backpack to carry everything in

BAJR Skills Passports

The British Archaeological Jobs Resource (BAJR) Passports has been designed to document the main skills you will require to gain employment as a professional archaeologist. If you are likely to attend other archaeological excavations around the country as a volunteer or are thinking of taking up archaeology as a career, we suggest you may wish to look at the BAJR Archaeology Skills Passport. At SHARP we are more than happy to sign your BAJR Passports.

However, if you think you will only ever be attending SHARP, and are doing the BERT course for your own interest, then you probably don't need one.

We **do not** supply BAJR books as part of the BERT course. In addition, we don't always stock them in our information hut, so to ensure you are not disappointed if we do not have them in stock, we suggest that you purchase one before you arrive.

<http://www.archaeologyskills.co.uk/product/archaeology-skills-passport/>

Timetable

The timetable for the BERT may occasionally differ as it depends on team members availability, weather conditions and other site considerations. However, this will give a rough idea of the breakdown of the course, many of the theory sessions where possible will be held on site using real archaeological examples.

| | Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|----------------------------|--|-----------------------|---------------------------------------|---|----------------|--|
| AM 1 st Session | Tour of site, Introductions, about SHARP, H&S | Excavation | Excavation | Excavation | Recording | Recording |
| AM 2 nd Session | What is archaeology, site formation, key terms etc | Excavation | Excavation (on-site levelling theory) | Excavation | Recording | Recording |
| Lunch | | | | | | |
| PM 3 rd Session | Excavation | Introduction to finds | Environmental Archaeology | Harris matrix/context sheets | Recording | Recording (on-site photography theory) |
| PM 4 th Session | Excavation | Excavation | Excavation | Excavation (on-site drawing theory with supervisor) | Afternoon tour | Recording |