

# Does teamwork make the dream work?

## A study of role and responsibilities within an excavation at Wivenhoe Quarry, Essex.

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<sup>1</sup> Hill, C. 2023. Photograph from Wivenhoe Quarry.

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Provide a critical reflection of your role and responsibilities within a wider archaeological project considering the requirements for professional and ethical judgement, and your relationships with other team members and other stakeholders.

## Introduction of the site

The site that will be the focus of the following work is an excavation that has recently finished in November 2023. The excavation was in advance of quarry work at Wivenhoe, approximately three miles from Colchester in Essex. The site is located on land traditionally used for agriculture, up until its sale to the client for quarrying. The Colchester Archaeological Trust (CAT) were employed to carry out the remedial works in advance of the area's destruction through extraction for sands and gravels. I worked as a member of the field staff from the 16th of October up until 21<sup>st</sup> November, which numbered twenty-two days. From CAT, the average staffing, excluding sick days or annual leave, was as follows: one project officer, one senior site assistant, and two to three site assistants.

## Reflective model employed

The following discussion will employ Kolb's reflective cycle (1984) which follows four stages of reflection: concrete evidence, reflective observation, abstract conceptualisation and active experimentation. The method is seen as one of the simpler reflective models however I believe given the short nature of discussion it will reflect the context more adequately (McLeod, 2023).

## Roles and responsibilities

My role was that of a field archaeology site assistant. My contract, which I signed in October 2021, focuses on tasks of hand excavation but is followed by other requirements such as "field walking, post excavation data as well as any other associated tasks." (CAT, 2021). This follow-up statement ensures that if CAT experiences a downturn in excavation, that there are parameters for me to carry out post-excavation work. This means I not only carry out tasks which I am well versed in such as excavation, but I have experimented within the last year by carrying out digital archiving skills and lithics analysis.

My role is much more than my contract suggests as my daily life encompasses more skills than described in my contract. It also does not encourage the development of CPD beyond my perceived capabilities. There is a difference between my responsibilities on paper and in reality, my responsibilities can often reflect a more senior role in terms of organisation, management and data collection.

My site experiences allowed me to encourage confidence within my peers of my ability, as reflected in my skillset being not just excavation. I learnt that my skills in motivation and morale can be equally as necessary as my ability to dig a feature. Since the excavation I have actively experimented with more than just excavation and had carried out more surveying and administration roles on site alongside my post excavation skills of digital archiving and lithics analysis. My post excavation skills have proven vital with changing approaches on site, such as picking up debitage and editing context sheets for grammar and spelling instead of after the site's completion.

# Professional judgement

## 1.1 ClfA judgement

On site the level of ClfA membership was poor with only one individual being ClfA member (myself at PCIfA level). An explanation of this is two-fold of both personal and professional reasons. One of the site assistants has recently finished their traineeship so may feel their experience is too minimal for membership. Others felt personally that ClfA serves no role for them in their development as field archaeologists therefore never joined despite their knowledge and experience. Professionally, there is also slight discouragement from a company level. It is well known that our former director vehemently opposed ClfA and their involvement, as often they provided contradictory comments and 'points to improve'. Therefore, only our interim director is a current ClfA member and none of the senior management. These sentiments are reflected by Cultural Associates Oxford which highlighted a fragmented discipline and 'out-of-touch' reality (Cultural Associates Oxford, 2023). I learnt that the advantages and role of ClfA were not recognised on a site level and the need for standard membership is discouraged. Since the site, I have actively encouraged the project officer to join ClfA with the reasoning that change will not happen without us being vocal to the relevant authorities.

## 1.2 Academic judgement

Despite the lack of ClfA membership all those present on site are well-educated via Undergraduate and Postgraduate degrees from various institutions across the UK and Turkey. These institutions as seen in figure 1 are members of UAUk (University Archaeology UK, 2023). As an organisation UAUk has working partnerships with several heritage bodies including ClfA and FAME (Federation of Archaeological Managers & Employers). Their advocacy of academic archaeology aims to represent these affiliated departments (UAUK, 2023). The presence of education at degree level was a positive, as those on site have gained study skills of analysis and interpretation which are key for commercial archaeology. However, as highlighted by Morgan (2023, p. 372) the "divide between what is taught in archaeology academic programs and what is done on the job" has persisted and the true worth of an archaeological degree within today's commercial climate should be noted. At the site's completion and undertaking of my own MA I have sought resources from additional pathways such as the CBA and Lithic Studies Society.

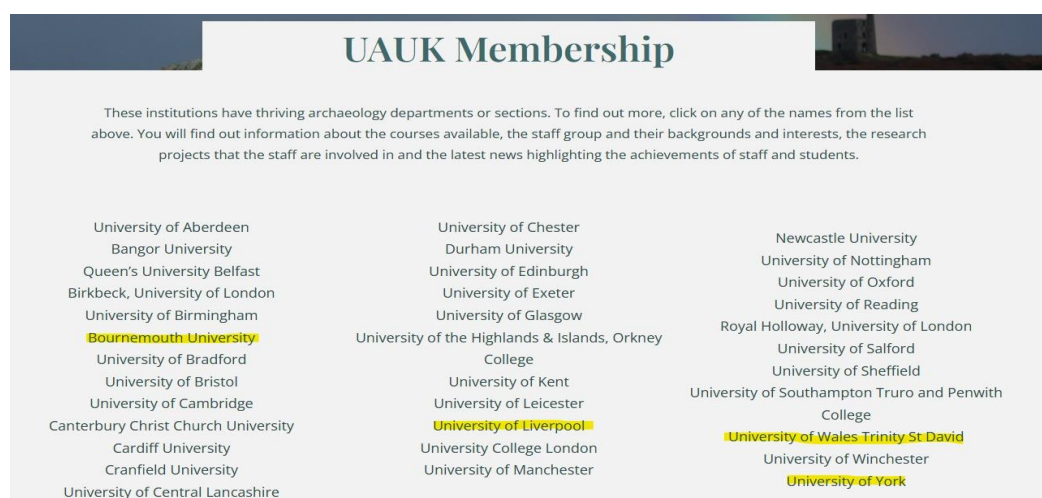


Figure 1: A screenshot from UAUk website with the institutions highlighted which the field archaeologists had previously attended or were in the process of attending (UAUK, 2023).

### 1.3 Longevity of experience

CAT prides itself on its staff longevity and thus their enormous amount of experience. The former director ran the Trust for 53 years until his retirement this year (CAT, 2023). All present management rose from field archaeologists or surveyors to become managers, with many additional staff members beginning their careers at CAT in the 1980s to 1990s and staying up until present day. This is significant given the high turnover of staff reported within Aitchison (2021). On site we had a combined 31 years of experience in UK commercial archaeology. On reflection our experience immediately heightened all our abilities as there was very little we had not excavated on our previous sites. It allowed us to excavate features to a high quality such as this pit with a large quantity of Bronze Age pottery and pot-boilers within it (see figure 2). However, this experience can be impeded by issues on site between staff members and the site hierarchy. Personally, I feel we have always been encouraged to develop our excavation skills even if features can be challenging (for example burials or complex stratigraphy). And this site proves that learning with one-on-one guidance can be key to its success (ClfA 2020, Morgan 2023).



Figure 2: A pit with large quantity of pottery and pot-boiler stones and carefully excavated by one of the site assistants under supervision of the project officer (K. Hailstone, 2023).

## Ethical judgement

### 2.1 ClfA Code of Conduct and Charter

The ClfA Code of Conduct is an integral document within the body itself, with its application essential to its chartered status (ClfA, 2014). The Code itself is mentioned no less than eight times within the Charter and By-laws document published in 2014 and amended and approved by the Privy Council in 2022. The Charter makes plain that members should “exercise their professional skill and judgement to the best of their ability and discharge any professional responsibilities with integrity” (ClfA, 2014, p.17). The Code of Conduct provides a similar statement with its opening principle, which focuses on the “ethical and responsible behaviour” (ClfA, 2014, p.4). Both documents place an emphasis on professionalism working in conjunction with ethical judgement. The site staff at Wivenhoe excavated at a high quality as approved by the county monitor despite not being accredited members of ClfA and bound by the competencies placed on them.

### 2.2 CAT Code of conduct and additional policies

All CAT staff members are to adhere to a Code of Conduct which was most recently reviewed in June 2023 (CAT Code of Conduct, 2023). The Code is accessible to staff members via their staff login on our website, alongside other policies which number 23 documents overall. This Code is a *verbatim* copy of the ClfA Code of Conduct (2014), which was most recently revised in 2022. This copying highlight CAT’s status as a Registered Organisation and cements its abidance by ClfA codes. In addition to the Code of Conduct, CAT staff members agree to adhere to several other policies regarding ethics. The Ethical Business Policy instructs every staff member to conduct themselves honestly, legally and fairly whilst its Equal Opportunities Policy highlights existing prejudices within archaeology and its commitment to eliminating these issues (CAT Equal Opportunities Policy, 2023).

When I first joined the company, these policies were not in place to my knowledge but nonetheless practised in principle. However, they are now in writing and available to every staff member employed as of June 2023. These additional policies increase the individual’s responsibility, and their professional conduct should be strengthened by adherence to policies such as these. Therefore, it can be argued whether a ClfA member or not, all CAT staff members are bound by the same ethical responsibility as laid out in its standards.

## Relationship of team members and stakeholders

### 3.1 CAT Fieldwork team and hierarchy

CAT maintained a field team which included one project officer, one senior site assistant and two to three site assistants. This team worked under the CAT Fieldwork manager and collectively answered directly to the Director and the Board of Trustees headed by a chairman. However, in this project’s specific scope it was only the fieldwork team and manager that ever interacted with the other contractors or were on site.

Overall, the team was compatible with each other. However, there were times the system broke down. The team was hampered by a lack of communication, with a key factor being that the role of senior site assistant is extremely enigmatic and seen by many simply as a pay rise with limited additional responsibility. Whereas in other units with traditional roles of Project Officer, Supervisor, and Assistant Supervisor this structure does not exist within CAT (see figure ...). The senior archaeologist present on site was not viewed as reliable by the PO, leading to micro-management

with surveying and machine stripping. The PO, though proficient in his role, grew to be easily agitated and eventually a large argument occurred on site which led to the senior archaeologist being removed via our management and leaving one project officer with three site assistants. This hampered our productivity, and the incident was raised in our recent appraisals. It is highlighted by Lawson (1993) that the archaeological management cannot become mechanistic due to its sheer uniqueness of site decisions. But it is necessity that archaeologists develop a standard of professionalism that is encouraged and sustained from site to site (Zirne, 2018). The archaeology may change but the professionalism of individuals should not.

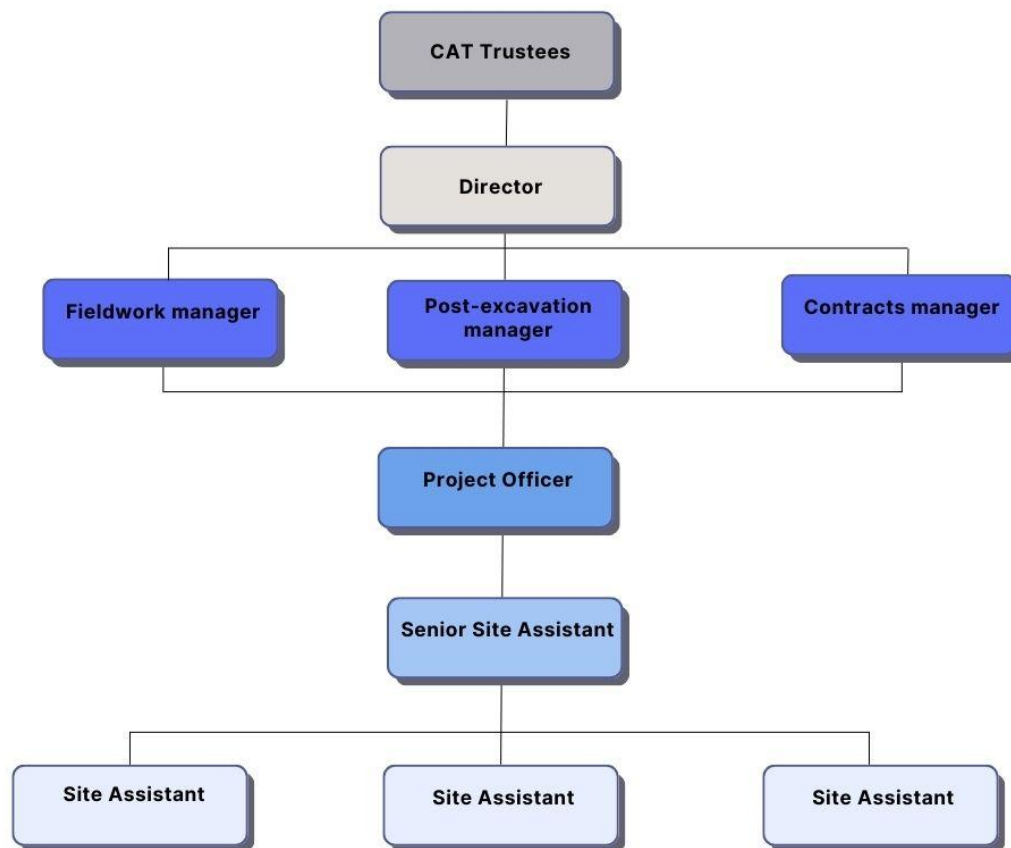


Figure 3: A graphic to display the current hierarchy of CAT as of this year (adapted from CAT Hierarchy document 2023).

### 3.2 Site contractors and hierarchy

The site involved four companies including CAT. The principal client had bought the land of the landowner who had used it previously for pasture. The client consequently hired the principal contractor to manage the site and groundworks, including the hiring of CAT for the archaeological works. The principal contractor also hired an archaeological consultant (see figure 4). The principal client has had a long-standing relationship with CAT whereas the principal contractor and archaeological consultant are both new relationships, and this site was the first of these new connections. Although the weather and site logistics delayed the site's finish by a few weeks there was a lot of engagement between the stakeholders and with the site's archaeology. This engagement is strongly advocated by bodies such as Historic England (2022). The consultant's involvement was ineffective in comparison to CAT's knowledge and local connections, for example having a strong relationship with the county monitor aiding the site's progression (Carroll, 2018). Upon reflection our site relationships can be viewed by other stakeholders as more essential than the work itself. In future investigations it is hoped that CAT will be employed for the adjoining fields at Wivenhoe in advance of further quarrying, given the quality of the work produced during this year. It is also hoped that a consultant will not be employed for future works as from a field archaeologist perspective there was nothing more contributed to the site in addition to our own knowledge and work.

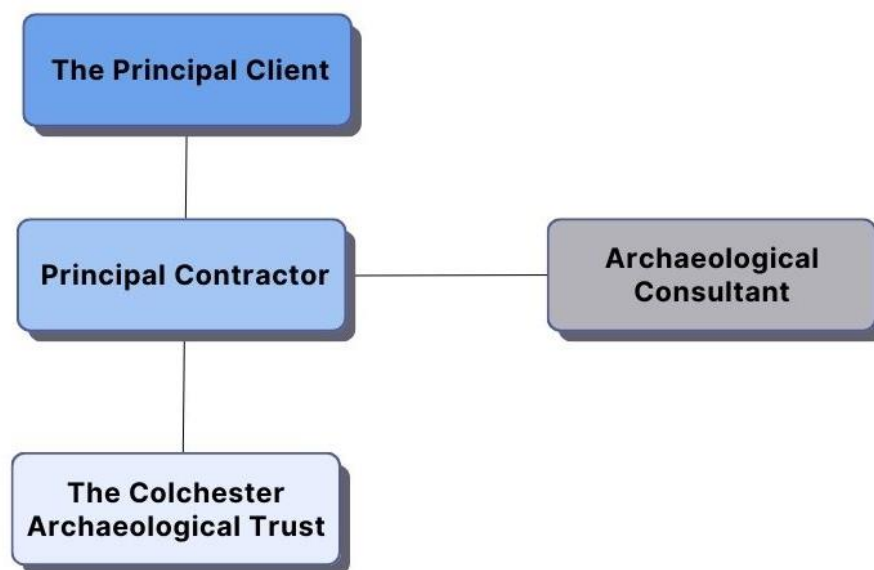


Figure 4: A graphic displaying the stakeholders involved at this site (personal collection, 2023).

## Conclusion

The site at Wivenhoe Quarry involved a small team and lasted approximately two and a half months in total. The site, although not particularly large, was a microcosm of activity and relationships which involved both professional and ethical situations which upon reflection could have benefitted from different approaches. Whilst the excavation techniques were of high quality, the interpersonal relationships of those on site caused a lapse in productivity and highlighted areas in which the company could improve, such as hierarchical responsibility. In answer to the provocative title 'does teamwork make the dreamwork?' I conclude that it can do but only when all participants are willing to contribute on a realistic professional and ethical level.

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