



## Swaledale and Arkengarthdale Archaeology Group (SWAAG)

### Excavations and Fieldwork Safety Guidance

SWAAG wish to thank Access Cambridge Archaeology (ACA) for allowing use of their Health and Safety guidelines.

**This Guidance should be read in conjunction with any Risk Assessment for the activity and should be followed together with any supplementary advice offered by SWAAG supervisors.**

**The Guidance is applicable to all participants in, and visitors to, excavation and fieldwork activities (e.g. surveying). Anyone behaving recklessly and/or ignoring these guidelines will be requested to leave the site. The Activity Leader's decision in this matter is final.**

#### **Observance of this Guidance is important in order to avoid:**

- Injury to people: we are all responsible for each other's safety.
- Damage to property.

#### **General:**

- Behave sensibly at all times.
- Be always aware of and alert to your surroundings and surrounding activities.
- Particularly when excavating, **we strongly advise that you have up-to-date protection against tetanus.** Any broken skin (blisters, cuts etc) should be cleaned thoroughly and covered. Tetanus status to be updated if necessary in event of significant injury.
- All devices which restrict the ability to hear instructions and warnings, e.g. i-pods, MP3 players etc., to be kept switched off. Phone calls must be taken/made in a safe area away from the excavation areas.
- Watch out for hazards on the ground and overhead.
- Clean your hands thoroughly before eating.
- No intoxicants to be brought onto site and no persons to be on site while under the influence of intoxicants.
- Professional medical advice should be sought in the event of feeling unwell after an excavation.
- Report any health and safety concerns which you may have to the Activity Leader.
- There will be a first aid kit on site; please ask the Activity Leader if you need to use it.
- All accidents should be reported to the Activity Leader.
- In areas to which the public have access, consideration should be given to controlling access to the excavation/survey areas by the use of hazard tape.

#### **Personal Protective Equipment for an Excavation:**

- Boots, preferably with steel toe caps, are recommended footwear. Safety footwear **MUST** be worn when using a mattock or pick, or when lifting heavy stones.
- The Activity Leader reserves the right to restrict the scope of activities of any person not wearing satisfactory footwear.
- Safety goggles are recommended when using mattocks, picks, or hammers in areas where there is rock and/or other material likely to splinter.
- A safety helmet should be worn when working with or near farm machinery and/or mechanised earth moving equipment, if you are excavating significantly below ground level or there are hard objects, e.g. tree branches, structures, at head height.
- A reflective vest/jacket should be worn when working with or near farm machinery and/or mechanised earth moving equipment.
- Always wear gloves when digging.

- Wear rubber gloves when washing finds.

### **Hidden cables and pipes:**

- Be aware there may be electricity, gas, water or sewerage pipes just a few centimetres below where you are digging.
- Report any cables and pipes that you uncover to the Activity Leader.

### **Contamination:**

- Be aware that objects such as tins and bottles may contain residues of dangerous substances.
- Don't taste or sniff anything you find in the ground.

### **Tripping and falling:**

- Be aware that as a test pit/trench gets deeper it will become more of a hazard.
- Keep the site tidy at all times.
- Keep the area within 2m of the test pit/trench clear of equipment and anything else that might be a trip hazard (that includes the spoil heap!).
- Walk AROUND a test pit/trench, NOT across it.
- Take special care when moving around the site, especially when climbing or working on uneven ground or steep slopes.
- Take care walking in fields, especially on wet grass and rocks, both of which can be very slippery.
- Be aware of ropes, stakes and posts used in grids during surveying.
- Take special care as you walk whilst surveying and carrying the magnetometry, geophysical and GPS equipment.

### **Animals:**

- Watch out for animals which may be trying to interfere with you or your work, or have quietly positioned themselves somewhere where they are a trip hazard.
- Do not approach animals, particularly if they have young with them, and do not feed them.

### **Weather:**

- Wear appropriate clothing for the weather, bring spares and do not forget that the weather in the Dales is changeable.
- If it's sunny, watch out for sunburn. Use hat/sunblock as needed.
- If it's hot, drink plenty of fluids and take breaks in the shade as needed.

### **Covid-19:**

- Please follow the guidance. Do not come on site if you have tested positive for Covid-19, have been in contact with someone who has tested positive for Covid-19 or feel unwell.

### **Equipment usage:**

- **NEVER** stand behind someone shovelling (so you don't get hit by their elbow).
- **ALWAYS** stand well back and behind the test pit/trench when the spade, shovel or mattock are being used (so you're not at risk of falling in if pushed from behind, and if chips of stone fly up they won't hit you).
- **NEVER** reach into the test pit/trench when someone is using the spade, shovel or mattock (so you don't get your hand or face hit).
- **NEVER** over-load the sieve (½ shovel-full max. in the sieve at a time), bucket or wheelbarrow (so you don't strain your back).
- **NEVER** hold the mattock with the metal head uppermost (so it doesn't slide down and hit your hand).
- **NEVER** raise the mattock above head height (so it doesn't slide down and hit your head/shoulder, or fly off the end and hit someone else).
- **Don't** swing the mattock into the ground too hard – you may damage objects hidden in the ground, or jar your shoulder if it hits something hard.

.....**FOLLOW THE GUIDELINES, ENJOY EXCAVATING AND FIELDWORK IN SAFETY...**

SWAAG 19 May 2025.