

Community Archaeology on the Mendip Plateau

Chewton Mendip Test Pit Risk Assessment

Before commencing fieldwork the following possible hazards should be considered.

Disused mine workings
Underground and overhead cables and services
Falling objects
Uneven or slippery surfaces
Grid pegs and string lines
Deep trenches
Soil collapse
Use of hand tools and wheel barrows
Strains from lifting/handling
Hand injuries from lifting/handling
Infections from soils
Weather

Chewton Mendip Test Pit Risk Assessment Guidance Notes

Disused mine workings:

PREVENTIVE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES:

Like much of the Mendip Hills region, areas of Chewton Mendip has, over many centuries, been subject to mineral extraction. Shafts excavated for mineral extraction can remain undocumented, and there is the potential that the excavation could encounter previously unknown mine workings. Also there could be well shafts undocumented.

Diggers advised that if in any doubt, not to dig. If during the dig they encounter voids or particularly loose soil, to stop immediately. If they suspect a shaft, to notify Mendip District Council.

Underground and overhead cables and services:

PREVENTIVE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES:

Location of services should be checked before work starts.

Diggers advised that if in any doubt about where their service cables and pipes are situated then not to dig.

Falling objects:

PREVENTIVE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES:

Test pits placed under trees and other overhanging objects present a risk from falling objects: likewise pits situated close to buildings

Diggers advised place test pits away from overhanging trees and other objects and away from buildings.

Uneven or slippery surfaces:

PREVENTIVE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES:

Test pits and surrounds can be slippery and uneven.

Diggers advised to wear boots with good grip and to move carefully around site.

Grid pegs and string lines:

PREVENTIVE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES:

Pegs and string can present a trip hazard.

Diggers advised to use pegs and string lines which are brightly coloured and to remove as soon as convenient.

Deep pits:

PREVENTIVE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES:

The stability of the test pit sides should not be assumed.

All test pits where water is likely to collect should be filled or covered as soon as work in them is ended.

The site of the pit should be clearly visible to all involved.

Diggers advised to cover unfinished pit at all stages when not working, to fence off if appropriate and to put up warning sign.

Soil collapse:

PREVENTIVE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES:

No-one should work alone in case of accident.

Diggers advised that spoil heaps be located away from the test pits to avoid pressure on pit edges and slippage. Diggers advised not to work alone and not to dig deeper than comfortably able or safe to do so.

Use of hand tools

PREVENTIVE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES:

Tools can be hazardous if broken or left lying around.

Diggers advised only use serviceable hand tools. Archaeologists' trowels are advised and can be borrowed from CAMP

Strains from lifting/handling:

PREVENTIVE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES:

Strains can occur when lifting or twisting awkwardly or lifting too heavy a load. Buckets should be used when deeper in trench to avoid back problems due to swinging shovel loads. Proper lifting techniques should be used at all times (bend knees and straight back etc).

Diggers are advised not to lift too much at a time, to be careful how they move in and out of pit and to take frequent rests.

Hand injuries from lifting/handling:

PREVENTIVE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES:

Care should be taken when handling rough, sharp (glass, metal, flint, wood splinters etc.) and/or heavy objects

Diggers advised to wear protective gloves and have First Aid kit available

Infections from soils:

PREVENTIVE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES:

Soils can harbour infections and disease

Diggers are advised to wear long-sleeved clothes, full length trousers and gloves at all times and to wash hands thoroughly after digging and before eating and to have current tetanus injection.

Weather:

PREVENTIVE AND PROTECTIVE MEASURES:

Outdoor work means that diggers are susceptible to the British weather.

Digger advised to wear suitable clothing, hats and sun cream in sunny weather and not to dig in wet weather.