

Appendix

Volunteer Case Studies

The case studies are based on interviews, feedback and questionnaires by the volunteers and group leaders and are written in June 2024 by the Project Team (Alice De Leo, with contributions by Karen Howard)

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SUFFOLK MIND

SUMMARY

28 clients from Suffolk Mind were proactively engaged with the *Rendlesham Revealed* project and given priority to volunteer, with eight dedicated days on-site at the excavations, fieldwalking and river valley survey. Additional workshops were organised including at the Geoarchaeology Labs, University of Cambridge, as well as post-excavation at the archaeological contractor's warehouse.

Six case studies are presented of clients who volunteered multiple days, based on feedback from a group interview held three months after the final fieldwork season. These illustrate encouraging outcomes, especially when read alongside the survey data presented in the Project's annual evaluation reports.

All the clients who volunteered have diagnoses of Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD) and/or Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). A description of these diagnoses is provided, along with observations by Claire Andrade, group facilitator for Suffolk Mind's Waves service.

Consultation with Suffolk Mind ensured barriers to participation were addressed, mainly financial and transport. The clients identified the following major barriers affecting their everyday lives: social anxiety, fear of the unknown, leaving the house, sensory overload, travelling. The Project provided a free mini-bus, reimbursed other travel costs and provided refreshments on site. Clients volunteered as a group with staff from Suffolk Mind; a Zoom session held in the first year explained what to expect; the same project staff were on site at all volunteer days. Clients were given autonomy to choose activity each day and were given '*British Archaeological Jobs Resource Archaeology Skills Passports*' to record skills.

Leaving the house to volunteer was a big achievement for most clients. Once they volunteered with the Project the first time they understood what was expected and had the confidence to do more.

Archaeology in particular, especially the practical hands-on tasks and contributing to important research, appeared to be an important aspect for the clients. Not all types of volunteering opportunities would have had the same benefits for them.

RENDLESHAM REVEALED VOLUNTEER CASE STUDIES: SUFFOLK MIND SUMMARY

The clients all talked about the “*Rendlesham ripple effect*”. Volunteering with the Project has motivated them in many ways, such as joining other voluntary groups, enrolling on distance-learning further education, training to be a peer-support worker, or engaging with mental health services in a way they were not able to before. For clients with such long, enduring mental health illnesses, outcomes like these are not usually seen as a result of traditional mental health services.

Being involved in a long-term project was beneficial for the clients as staff saw a greater positive impact on clients’ mental health for those joining multiple volunteer opportunities over 3 years, more so than a one-off experience. Commitment and consistency is a real struggle for these clients, so returning each year was a major achievement for them.

The case studies show that projects like *Rendlesham Revealed* can supplement traditional mental health services and contribute to recovery by providing an alternative informal environment for; difficult conversations, socialising and bonding, realising their value, giving a grounding practical experience - all of which can lead onto some big personal achievements.

The clients used the following words and phrases during the group interview to describe their experience volunteering with the Project:

- Life saving
- Life changing
- Grounding
- Focuses your mind
- Slows your thoughts down
- Puts life in perspective
- Privileged to be a part of it
- Bonding
- Humble
- Calming
- Connected
- Welcoming
- Being in a collective
- Friendly
- Improved confidence
- made me want to go out of the house and make the effort
- Brought out the inner me
- Eye-opener
- Sense of belonging

MENTAL HEALTH DIAGNOSES

BOARDLINE PERSONALITY DISORDER (BPD) AND POST-TRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)

Personality disorder is a serious mental health condition affecting up to 52% of psychiatric out-patients and 70% of in-patients and forensic patients (*National Centre for Biotechnical Information* 2017 Oct; 41(5):247-253).

It can be caused by genetics coupled with negative environment or trauma. Complex PTSD can also be derived from prolonged childhood trauma.

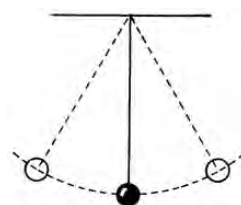
People with this diagnosis can struggle with intense and overwhelming emotions daily, as well as social anxiety, depression, self-harm, an underlying and continuous sense of fear, and PTSD-like symptoms such as flashbacks and dissociation.

These are very real barriers to meeting emotional needs, such as being part of a community, going out and enjoying interests, achieving their goals, feeling a sense of identity, feeling valued, or even going out for a walk to maintain physical health and wellbeing.

The experience can be described as a pendulum swinging between symptoms of psychosis and neurosis, very rarely settling in the stable middle.

Psychosis

- Irrational thoughts
- Paranoia
- Hallucinations
- Delusions
- Severe distress



Neurosis

- Anxiety
- Irritability
- Negative emotions
- poor response to stress
- Interpret everyday situations as a threat
- Low self-esteem
- Anger

↙ Stable Middle ↘

OBSERVATIONS: CLAIRE ANDRADE GROUP FACILITATOR, SUFFOLK MIND

Claire Andrade is a mental health professional and has been a group facilitator teaching psychoeducation for the last 8 years within the Waves personality disorder service for Suffolk Mind.

“My aim as a Suffolk Mind employee in working with the Rendlesham Revealed project team was that clients would be able to see how they can meet some of their emotional needs in practice, rather than just talking about it. They could then reflect on how it feels when they meet these needs and come to feel that they can do it more often.”

“Many clients have had negative experiences making them believe they are not worthy, valued, capable or important, this project really challenges this, more in short space of time than many other practices.”

“Most have suffered significant past trauma and as such find life very difficult and can be triggered into feeling very unsafe even when they are safe. Some may also experience episodes of dissociation. They struggle significantly with feelings of rejection and abandonment and find relating to others a core deficit. Due to these difficulties, they find managing their emotions very difficult, so a safe, calm and supportive environment is important where rules and boundaries are clear and they know what to expect. They need to feel accepted and understand the role of staff around them.”

“The specific needs of this group were so well met [by the Project]. Staff were so welcoming and calm around them, always supportive, gave clear information and instructions and were always with the group to guide them where needed or to answer questions. They treated the group as individuals who were there to learn and get involved and not as a group of people with a mental health diagnosis. Archaeology was always the focus which is exactly what the group needed. [Project] Staff were engaging the group which really focuses their minds on something positive and productive.”

[The Project] also made it possible financially for individuals to attend the site by funding transport and arranging for a bus to pick up the group and return them to their hometowns. Without this many [clients] would never be able to [volunteer] at all as their health prevents many from working and they may receive disability payments only.

“It has been so impactful for the group in so many ways, physically, socially, emotionally and they have laughed and smiled a lot. They have learnt that their perception of how others see them may be wrong, which is life changing.”

“None of the group had ever been on an archaeological site before or been able to learn about the history from those working in this field. They had never met experts in any field except mental health before and felt so privileged to be able to listen to and learn from them all. Everything they did was new for them and they were amazed that they were allowed to dig for themselves. The only thing they found challenging was leaving at the end of the day. We could see the group gaining confidence through this learning, which has really enhanced their sense of self and shown them they are valuable and can contribute in their community. This is something that is very hard for them to learn but through this project they have.”

“This project has been remarkable in so many ways for the group, some have been stated above. It has opened up a whole new world for the group in terms of their actual, rather than perceived ability to become involved in things, as many of the group keep themselves very isolated. Some having not left the house for months at a time. They believe themselves to be of no value and broken and being wanted and allowed to volunteer to do this has been invaluable in showing them this is not the case. They feel more able to contribute and could really see themselves in a more positive light which is positive for their mental health. A few have managed to volunteer at Sutton Hoo and some others have gone on to run community peer groups and volunteer in museums.”

“Mental health services have not been able to provide this level of impact for them, so it shows how valuable being outside, learning and doing to find the Saxon's has been for them. We can't thank the teams enough. This diagnosis can manifest in many ways and one can be that people can really struggle to consistently attend things, even when they really want to, so to have had clients come to all or most of the days over 3 years is amazing. I know that one of the biggest things for them apart from the dig itself was the way that they were made to feel so welcome and treated as equals, this has been said a lot and something they genuinely do not feel on a daily basis at all. Staff on the dig made them feel free from stigma and that is huge.”

These observations and the following case studies evidence some significant mental health benefits for the clients involved in the Rendlesham Revealed project. However, more research is needed more widely on the benefits of heritage, and archaeology in particular, on the more long, enduring and persistent diagnoses such as BPD and PTSD for the management of mental health and how these benefits can be sustained.



**“I never ever
thought I’d be
given these
opportunities
...it’s brought that
inner ‘me’ out.”**

CASE STUDY: SUFFOLK MIND

NEV

Nev volunteered with the excavations and fieldwalking for six days over the past three years and joined the post-excavation workshop.

When we first met Nev on the field he was quiet and nervous, but soon he got stuck in with the trowelling and taking environmental soil samples. By the end of the first day he was talking to everyone. Over the next two years, Nev brought such enthusiasm to the team.

Nev’s level of concentration when excavating or finds washing was evident, he took pride in his tasks and seemed to enjoy being around the group. Even when Nev was finding life challenging and was struggling with his mental health, he turned up, was focused on the tasks and left with a smile on his face.

Speaking to Nev today, several months after he volunteered, he was emotional when telling us about what volunteering had meant to him, his voice shaking and tears in his eyes. He spoke with pride when sharing how volunteering with Rendlesham Revealed gave him the confidence to pursue his training to become a volunteer peer support worker.

Nev spoke about how volunteering made him feel:

“When I joined WAVES I wouldn’t say boo to anyone. I was hardly leaving the house. I weren’t doing anything. So the opportunity of doing something [with archaeology] that I’d watched on TV for so long was a no brainer for me.”

[The Project] has helped me, from doing it [archaeology] and how relaxing it was. Doing it has brought us back to earth, just what the calming nature of doing it and the history behind it.”

Nev described his greatest achievement volunteering with *Rendlesham Revealed*:

“Getting me out the door and not just for attending WAVES, so that was a big part of it, it helped me start getting out of the door again.”

Suffolk Mind’s Waves course is delivered through group sessions, and Nev had made a relatively new friendship at the time when they both started volunteering with *Rendlesham Revealed*. Sharing this experience with Natalie, another client, has strengthened this friendship, which gives Nev that extra support in his daily life:
“And it built mine and Nat’s friendship, our relationship, to what it is now. I’ve gone from being in that shell to where I am now. When Nat first met me, she weren’t quite sure what to make of me. We talk every day together, we support each other”

Nev told us how *Rendlesham Revealed* has impacted his life and has motivated him to explore new things:

“It’s brought me from being in that shell to out doing bits, where I’m finishing WAVES where I didn’t think I was going to finish at one point, to then being taken on by Rethink to help run a men’s group for BPD. I’m now training with Can Connect to be a lived experience peer support worker, voluntary.”

Nev continued to explain about his training with Can Connect, and how proud he is that he is undertaking the same course as some professionals.

“There is what 3 or 4 volunteers doing this course, you’ve got people from Mind doing it, people from Norfolk social services and even some doctors doing it and I’m sitting there thinking ‘I’m doing this!’ and it’s that opportunity where I would always go back to WAVES and Rendlesham because if it weren’t for that I wouldn’t be doing any of this. So I’m really humble.

It’s just being offered that opportunity to do that [become a peer support worker], I thought it was a joke at first and that is why peer support work took me forward to that. When they asked me to do that in September/October last year I was like, it was daunting and I was like ‘what me? this is me you’re talking about’ and so its really nice I’ve been given that opportunity”

Nev was overwhelmed that he passed the DBS check: *“I’m always open and honest about my past. When I got that letter beginning of last week, I messaged Nat and sent a copy of it and it was tearful but they were happy tears.”*

RENDLESHAM REVEALED VOLUNTEER CASE STUDIES: SUFFOLK MIND
CASE STUDY: NEV

“I’m now in week three of the training, last week was about wellbeing and this week was about what you’ve been through and that, so for me last week and this week I’ve found quite easy cos I’m just going through what I’ve been through many times before and obviously I spoke about Rendlesham from the beginning and what it has done for my mental health.”

“But from that person who wouldn’t stand up in front of anything, anyone and say boo, now you can’t shut me up.”

“My highlight would have been the first session we went to [Rendlesham] because of how eye opening it was and at the end of the day going ‘already? we want to stay’. The first day we went was my favourite day cos it got me hooked.”





“It made me feel very humble...it puts life into a different perspective”

CASE STUDY: SUFFOLK MIND

NATALIE

Natalie volunteered with the fieldwork for five days over the three years and joined the post-excavation workshop.

It was evident while on site that Natalie really enjoyed the experience, she brought a friendly and calm energy, which we noticed the rest of the group seemed to respond to and find reassuring. Natalie openly joined in conversations asking questions to the Project staff, learnt how to hand-excavate, take environmental soil samples and got stuck in to the finds washing.

We asked Natalie to tell us why she decided to volunteer: *“I volunteered through WAVES. Claire [Suffolk Mind staff] was just so passionate about it so that was contagious.”* Natalie had previously been to America on a “dinosaur dig” with her mum quite a few years ago, which sparked her interest: *“I’ve always been interested in history so when the opportunity came up it was like ‘Wow!’. It’s just the excitement of it and learning about the people who were here before us. It’s just all very fascinating, I suppose.”*

For Natalie, the experience brought more than she was expecting, finding it grounding and an opportunity for reflection. *“The first year it was really interesting. It wasn’t what I was expecting. I didn’t expect it to be so grounding, like it was very peaceful. It made me feel very humble and just kind of putting you there in the thick of it, in the big scheme of things how teeny tiny we are and I don’t know, just puts life into a different perspective. So it was much more than the history and the digging in the ground that I took out of it. I think I took some personal growth from it and a lot reflection time.”*

RENDLESHAM REVEALED VOLUNTEER CASE STUDIES: SUFFOLK MIND
CASE STUDY: NATALIE

Natalie can struggle to leave the house at times but this Project gave her a new motivation. *“It’s that fear of the unknown, it’s literally terrifying and I know we were both pretty scared about going and we were excited but we were really nervous and we didn’t know what to expect but you guys were all just so amazing. You know I think everyone struggles with fear of the unknown to some degree but for people with BPD it’s super heightened, you know it’s really anxiety provoking. You guys were so welcoming, so accommodating, so friendly and understanding, when we went on every occasion.”*

Bonding with friends and family was another important and unexpected outcome for Natalie while volunteering at Rendlesham, especially with her new friendship with Nev, another Suffolk Mind client. *“You want to be with other people, for me it was a good amount of socialising. We [Nev and I] had really good bonding, it was when we became quite good friends from the first one.”*

Natalie’s dad also got involved, he dropped her off to volunteer a few times and then she asked if he could volunteer as well. *“getting dad involved was really lovely, because the dinosaur dig I’d done with my Mum in America, so it was really nice to have the memory with Dad as well.”*

George, her dad, was at the group feedback interview and said: *“when my daughter said she was going on an archaeological dig, thinking back to the fact that I’d done something like that before, I thought it would be such a good thing [for her]. It’s been quite humbling sitting here this afternoon...people with mental health, obviously certain mental health problems, can have so much isolation now, and I can hear from what everyone is saying is that these projects where they volunteer [are important].”*



“This is a once in a lifetime kind of thing and I’m just very excited to be a part of it. It just slows your thoughts down [and gave me] a sense of belonging.”



**“It’s all coming
into place at last!
Hopefully then I’ll
be able to get a
job and be sorted
in a career I’m
properly
interested in”**

CASE STUDY: SUFFOLK MIND

KERRY

Kerry began volunteering with the excavations in 2022, starting out with just a few days, she asked to return every week, volunteering for a total of 22 days. She became part of the team, progressing from novice hand-excavation to recording archaeological features and even helping new volunteers. Kerry was also involved with the geophysical survey and fieldwalking over six days in 2022 and 2023.

This was Kerry’s first experience volunteering with archaeology and you could see that she loved being on site. Kerry’s enthusiasm continued to grow and she did not waste any time in finding other projects to volunteer with, to build on her newly learnt skills, including with the local amateur archaeology group, Sutton Hoo, and Cotswold Archaeology.

Kerry has since enrolled onto a part-time distance-learning undergraduate degree in archaeology with the University of Leicester.

The *Rendlesham Revealed* project came at a time when Kerry was at a cross-roads in her life that involved her having to give up her career of 23 years, and she has grabbed this new opportunity with both hands and is continuing to soar.

We asked Kerry to tell us about herself and why she decided to volunteer: *“I grew up in Colchester so you didn’t have to go far to find Roman stuff everywhere and I was always digging stuff up... as a kid. And then as I grew up I didn’t take it any further than that. I just sort of carried on and fell into different careers.”*

RENDELESHAM REVEALED VOLUNTEER CASE STUDIES: SUFFOLK MIND
CASE STUDY: KERRY

Kerry explained that her background was in motorbike sales and then she became a mechanic, before moving onto breakdown recovery and car transport for the past 20 years until her circumstances changed a few years ago. *"I had to stop the career that I'd had, because injury meant that I couldn't carry it on and then it [Rendlesham Revealed] come in the cross over of what to do next and then I ended up kind of picking back up what I 'wanted' to do rather than what I 'fell in' to do."*

Kerry heard about *Rendlesham Revealed* after reading about it online. She volunteered in the second year after hearing that her friend was going to volunteer through Suffolk Mind. *"he'd got a few days through WAVES and I knew about WAVES because I was waiting to go on and then now he's finished WAVES and I'm doing WAVES and it's all sort of intermingled in a good way really. It has definitely changed the course of my life."*

Kerry has been diagnosed with autism, ADHD and recently BPD, she openly described how these conflicting illnesses can be a struggle:

"It's like the full set. [With autism] getting the order of things its extremely important... that bit is really good, but then the ADHD kicks in and it's like, I've had enough now. Your mind is like, oh I want to do that bit, oh now I want to do that. Then that calms down and then the autism is like finish that, finish that, finish that before you do the next bit but then the BPD says nope. Finish it, start it, no! It's just stop-start."

We asked Kerry to describe her experience volunteering with *Rendlesham Revealed* and this led onto a discussion about the social aspect. She enjoyed being in a group focused on archaeology and doing tasks in companionable silence.

"You're outdoors. You're in a collective so you have got people to talk to but when you don't you are still not on your own. There are lots of people like me who are mentally ill that kind of want to be in a group but you don't want to be sitting and talking to someone the whole time, but you want to be with other people. You want to 'be' with them but you don't want to 'be' with them. When you get a lot of people in a group who will quite happily sit together in silence digging a hole and scraping and now and then you say the odd word or the odd sentence and that's fine and you go back to your own thing."



Kerry reflected on a moment that was a highlight during her time volunteering:

“One moment was finding objects, everyone stopped to have lunch but I couldn’t sit still so I walked around and saw in the spoil heap some bones and then I saw a rivet that was part of a bone comb. At the end of lunch I showed Chris Scull and Chris let us sit and sieve the rest of the soil and we filled up the finds tray.”

Following her time at the excavations, Kerry joined the local amateur group who were involved in the survey fieldwork at Rendlesham. They trained her to use GPS equipment and to conduct geophysical surveys. *“You just think you go to a field and dig but there is so much work that goes behind that. Rather than just digging a hole there are all the other bits that go into it. Why we are digging in a certain area, there is a lot more to it than people realise. I think it is fascinating.”*

Kerry explained how she has been motivated to follow a new direction for her life involving a part-time distance learning degree in archaeology:

“I thought ‘right I’ll do some more archaeology stuff’ and then I got more and more into it...the job centre said that I could do a degree and do it properly. So I did and I’m now in the second year of my degree doing archaeology. The first year went by really quickly because I was really interested and then there was a couple of modules that I didn’t like, that really dragged on but it’s what you have to do with it but overall it’s kind of quite positive and a good experience. I can only wish I had this type of opportunity to do my degree when I was a kid as planned, but life took other turns though and here I am now.”





**“I’ve been waiting
my entire life to
do something
meaningful.
It was life
changing and it
probably saved
me”**

CASE STUDY: SUFFOLK MIND

DOUG

Doug volunteered 22 days with the excavations in 2022, joining his friend Kerry, also a client of Suffolk Mind who volunteered. Together, they became an important part of the volunteer team, at first only booking onto a couple of days, to then coming every week as often as they could. Doug excavated and recorded archaeological features. He went onto learn geophysical survey and fieldwalking over six days in 2022-2023.

Doug had a love of history since he was a young boy: *“In 1982 I’d seen in the East Anglian Daily Times that they were going to dig up one of the mounds at Sutton Hoo under Martin Carver. I was 15 I think at the time and I actually wrote a letter to Martin Carver saying that ‘I love my history please can I come on the dig?’ and I actually got a letter back and he said ‘yes we’d love to have you on the dig’. For various reasons my parents decided they weren’t going to take me on the dig and my life went in a different direction unfortunately.”*

We asked Doug why he decided to volunteer: *“I came to Rendlesham through WAVES. I make no secret of my mental health, I tried to kill myself a few years ago. I got involved with WAVES and I was amazed to hear that there was opportunities to go to Rendlesham, and then not content with spending one or two days there, along with Kerry, I spent the entire dig there.”*

“If I can ever talk to anyone about how much it has changed my life then I will talk forever.”

Doug spoke openly about his mental health and how this project has had an impact: *“I’ve had mental health issues my whole life, ADHD, BPD, PTSD and generally just being depressed all my entire life, years of being on pills, suicide attempt. I think I was at a cross roads ...and then from that absolute darkness, that real bad time, to get involved with the [Rendlesham Revealed] project. How can you not see the benefits of that. It was life changing and it probably saved me.”*

“It all comes from a personal desire to get better and if you haven’t got that then it doesn’t matter what is put in front of you, you know, it won’t have any effect on you whatsoever. You have to invest your time and energy and your desire.”



“I think this is where the project makes its mark. If you are suffering from [the different and conflicting traits of ADHD and BPD], that needle flickering going smashing from either side of the dial and not settling on anything for any point of time, when you get to a trench and you’re told ‘This is your job. This is your work. We are looking for this and that’ that needle sort of settles in the middle and you are focused on what you are supposed to be doing with an end result.”

“It does ground you and it absolutely it focuses your mind 100% to the task in hand so you have no opportunity to think about what you are doing. It’s the physical fact that you are out of your house. With a mental illness you are basically quite happy to stay at home, in the dark, in front of the TV and do absolutely nothing. And when you are given a purpose and you have invested not just time but emotion into the thing...I cannot over stress the benefits of doing something like that physically, and above all mentally, the calm and the serenity of it all.”

Doug had so many highlights during his time volunteering: *“Every single handful of dirt, every scrape of a trowel was a highlight. If you do archaeology as a job I don’t know if you soon forget the privilege of that actually you know, I can only think of two other Anglo Saxon palaces in England. The highlight was actually just the experience, I’ve been waiting my whole life for that.”*

Since volunteering at Rendlesham, Doug has continued his journey in archaeology, volunteering in practical ways with other projects. *“It leads on to other things. We joined various other archaeology groups and we were privileged enough to be involved in [Operation Nightingale]. We’ve been on Time Team we’ve met Carenza Lewis and it’s just been, it’s been just a fantastic time.”*

Doug reflected on how his life has come full circle from when he was 15 years old: *“It went full circle from writing a letter to Martin Carver in 1982 to leading a very interesting life and actually meeting Martin Carver last year and that wouldn’t have been possible without the Rendlesham Revealed project and the spin offs from that, joining local archaeological groups and it just opening up tonnes of stuff.”*

“It steers you in different directions and you’re not as isolated anymore and for me its life changing.”





**“I have learnt that
it's possible
to be involved
in something
like this”**

CASE STUDY: SUFFOLK MIND CLIENT A

Client A volunteered with the fieldwork since the very beginning, totalling eight days over three years, and also joined all the workshops offered.

This client has chosen to remain anonymous. They attended the group feedback interview but opted not to share anything at the time. This case study is based on their written feedback and on observations by the Suffolk Mind and Project staff.

Claire Andrade, group facilitator for Suffolk Mind's Waves service reflected: “When this client was first referred to Suffolk Mind, they struggled to engage in the services. I first met this client on the field at Rendlesham and this experience on the field searching for archaeological objects sparked a conversation with the client for the first time. Being at the archaeological site appeared to provide them with a calm and informal space to open up. It could be said that this moment was the catalyst for them to see the Waves service differently and allowing us at Suffolk Mind to support them. Now this client is progressing well through the Waves service”

The *Rendlesham Revealed* Project Delivery Officer reflected: “This client has been volunteering with the fieldwork since the very beginning. They seemed to be in their element excavating and talking about history. They brought a positive energy to the team and were supportive to other volunteers. Even on days where they seemed to be struggling, they turned up and were present in the tasks - this must have been an effort for them so I hope they see this as still an achievement. With each year, the client appeared more relaxed and you could see in them moments of enjoyment and their confidence grow. It was an joy having them as part of the volunteer team.”

RENDLESHAM REVEALED VOLUNTEER CASE STUDIES: SUFFOLK MIND
CASE STUDY: CLIENT A

We asked the client to tell us about their experience volunteering and what it meant to them:

"I decided to volunteer because how could I pass on the opportunity. I've always had an interest in history so to be able to unearth some 6,000 year old bone or pottery was awesome. My wish was to find human remains as I think they are interesting."

"I've been to Rendlesham Revealed for three years in a row, for two days each summer. The first year I got to learn a bit about soil samples and help get some. I also got to take part in my first dig which I really enjoyed and got to do plenty of."

"It has been great, I have learnt that it's possible to be involved in something like this and I really appreciate being included. I hope to help some more in the future."

"Being around you guys in a lovely environment has been really enjoyable. My wishes were granted on the last day and human remains were found, it's so special that I got to be part of something so sacred I'll never forget."





“having a connection with other people which I didn’t have before meant a lot”

CASE STUDY: SUFFOLK MIND

PAUL

Paul volunteered with the fieldwork since the very beginning totalling eight days over three years, and joining all the workshops offered.

Paul began on site with the river valley survey taking hand-auger samples of soil and recording them, to determine the original course of the River Deben. At first, Paul seemed nervous, only saying one-word answers, but you could see his interest and enthusiasm when doing the tasks. Paul then joined the visit to the geoarchaeology labs at Cambridge University, so he could see thin sections of the soil samples under the microscope. Since then, Paul was hooked, volunteering with all the other fieldwork opportunities and workshops offered to Suffolk Mind clients.

It was wonderful to see Paul each year progressing in his confidence, not only to carry out the tasks but he appeared more relaxed and happier to speak more with others.

We asked Paul to tell us why he decided to volunteer: “When I was younger I always had been interested in history and that, and I’ve always been sort of into it so it’s started from when I was younger. I was recommended this sort of project [by Suffolk Mind] as something that would suit me and that. And so when the first time came and I found out about the river movement and that, it kept my interest so it made me sort of exhilarated.”

For Paul, volunteering with *Rendlesham Revealed* helped him with his anxiety of leaving the house and it was the connection with other people that has been most meaningful.

Knowing how difficult it can be for Paul to leave the house, it was a big achievement catching the train and then the minibus each time to travel to Rendlesham; it really showed how much he wanted to be there.

“You know, it made me want to go out the house a bit more and make the effort and that you know. Take an effort to do something rather than just panicking about what might happen and thinking well it won’t happen. [Before Rendlesham] I stayed in a lot and that, sort of hiding away and that, just walking aimlessly around the streets.”

Paul reflected on his first day volunteering on-site: *“At first it was a bit daunting but once I got into it and once I knew I was ok, I was ok. I was more relaxed and that. I was ok. I was more relaxed and I enjoyed it and that. I got into it once I knew what was happening. You know I don’t like the unknown and that worried me”*

Paul’s highlight was: *“Finding all the pottery and that, bones and stuff, and that was the highlight and finding out about the river how the river moved that was interesting. How the river can move, it is fascinating that a river can move place.”*

Paul’s biggest achievement was: *“getting down and doing the digging, digging in the ground and actually getting to do that. Once I had done it once I knew I could do it again. Challenging myself.”*



“Having people with similar interests, having a connection with other people, which I didn’t have before meant a lot. Being quiet but having people around you, having someone to talk to when you want to. It brought me out myself a bit more and I feel a bit more connected. It was nice to be part of a community, a nice group of people as well, so it’s meant a lot”

SUFFOLK FAMILY CARERS

SUMMARY

A summary is presented of the Suffolk Family Carers involvement with *Rendlesham Revealed*, along with feedback from the group leaders and young people collected throughout the Project. Individuals have been kept anonymous.

38 young people aged 12-17yrs and 5 staff from Suffolk Family Carers were proactively engaged and given priority to volunteer with the *Rendlesham Revealed* project over 4 years. They were from Mildenhall, Lowestoft, Woodbridge, Ipswich and surrounding areas.

The Project delivered:

- 3x Bespoke annual residential archaeology course providing 9 dedicated days on-site at Rendlesham. (In 2021, the residential was instead delivered as multiple day trips due to the Covid-19 pandemic).
- 6x Pre- and post-residential trips/experimental archaeology workshops at Sutton Hoo, West Stow Anglo-Saxon Village and Hands on Heritage.
- 3x On-site specialist workshops
- 1x additional experimental archaeology workshop for eleven Year 11 school leavers, as part of the project's Anglo-Saxon kiln activity.

Suffolk Family Carers were consulted during the project's development phase to ensure that Project activities met their needs and addressed barriers to participation. The main barriers were financial and travel, as well as time away from their caring responsibilities. The project provided and funded transportation for all activities, including a mini-bus and onward journey taxi fares. Accommodation at the local youth hostel with full board, and shuttle service to the excavation site was also provided during the residential trips. The duration of the residential was capped to 3 days with the additional pre- and post- trips separately, at the suggestion of Suffolk Family Carers staff, to accommodate the schedules of as many young people as possible.

During the residential archaeology course at Rendlesham, the young people had a tour of the site and a finds handling session, followed by hands-on training in excavation,

RENDLESHAM REVEALED VOLUNTEER SUMMARY: SUFFOLK FAMILY CARERS

finds processing and fieldwalking. All training was formally recorded in British Archaeological Jobs Resources Archaeological Skills Passports. Additional on-site specialist workshops were delivered to compliment the learning focus of each season, including artefact conservation, animal bone identification, careers in archives.

During the residential archaeology course at Rendlesham, the young people had a tour of the site and a finds handling session, followed by hands-on training in excavation, finds processing and fieldwalking. All training was formally recorded in British Archaeological Jobs Resources Archaeological Skills Passports. Additional on-site specialist workshops were delivered to compliment the learning focus of each season, including artefact conservation, animal bone identification, careers in archives.

The pre- and post-residential trips were organised to ensure the young people were fully engaged and benefitted from the Project beyond just the excavation experience. All trips were hands-on and interactive. Pre-residential trips helped the young people to connect socially and gain an understanding of the project's context. The Project Team to introduced new topics and the young people could meet each other for the first time. The post-residential trips gave the young people an opportunity to reconnect with their new friendships and extended their learning through different hands-on activities.

The Suffolk Family Carers support staff were key to the young people's positive engagement and subsequent successful outcomes. The staff knew each participant well, had their trust and respect, and were fully engaged in ensuring everyone made the most of their experience.

The *Rendlesham Revealed* project was an opportunity to give these young people a unique opportunity to access practical training, experience new career options, learn life skills, improve wellbeing, build friendships and achieve their own aspirations.



SUFFOLK FAMILY CARERS SERVICE

Supporting unpaid carers aged 5-13yrs (Young Carers), 14-25yrs (Young Adult Carers), as well as adults, parent carers, UK armed forces. *Rendlesham Revealed* specifically engaged with people aged 12-17yrs.

A family carer provides practical help or emotional support to someone with a long term illness, disability, mental ill health or addiction, who could not cope day to day without this help.

In 2022/2023, Suffolk Family Carers supported 6050 unpaid family carers who deliver between 1 hour to 50 hours of unpaid care a week, with 798 new young carer registrations and 2,667 new adult carer registrations. [*Suffolk Family Carers Impact Report 2022/2023*]

1 in 5 young people have caring responsibilities. These young people may be withdrawn, lack confidence and be overlooked in society.

Suffolk Family Carers complete assessments on behalf of Suffolk County Council and offer advice and guidance, workshops and courses, emotional and wellbeing support, support in hospitals and helping people take a break.

Becoming an unpaid family carer is often a gradual process which impacts their daily life. Many do not recognise that they are carrying out a caring role and this can be a real barrier to accessing vital support.

For the Young Carers and Young Adult Carers, this can be particularly difficult impacting on their childhood. Caring for a parent with a physical condition, for example, may involve physical help such as getting dressed or doing the cooking, but caring for a parent with a mental health problem, or who misuses drugs or alcohol, involves more emotional guidance and support. Sibling carers may feel the need to keep an eye on the brother or sister they care for or worry about them when they are in school.

FEEDBACK

Four main themes consistently appeared in the feedback across all four years: social benefits; being responsible for and involved in real archaeology; learning new skills; challenging their perceptions of what they are capable of achieving.

SOCIAL BENEFITS

Firstly, the social benefits of meeting new people and making friends, was a significant outcome for this group, as for many this is usually nerve-racking and made difficult by being family carers. The Project activity was a place for these young people to be themselves and all share new experiences together, without worrying about their caring responsibilities or school work.

“Socially, introducing them to a new group of people and being away from home- it’s learning all those life skills. Some of them had been on a residential before, but some of them hadn’t. Some of the young people had never been on a train before, some of them have never been away from home for more than a couple of hours apart from being at school. It’s getting them to learn how to be in a social situation.”

“I think the key thing was the social side and being comfortable getting to know each other, some of them were saying they were friends for life afterwards.”

Comments from Suffolk Family Carer Staff

“I liked making new friends, finding bones and ancient things”

“First I was really nervous cos I was new and now I got to know so many people”

“I have learned that it is so much easier to make friends”

Comments from young carers who volunteered

“Literally for three days some of them didn’t stop talking. I’ve been on lots of trips - Especially on the coach trip in the way home, everyone is shattered and it’s often silent- but the conversation kept going and going and going. It wasn’t just one person- it was everybody. I think that compared to the first trip out [before the residential], where everyone was very quiet and not talking to anybody and they were sitting in rows by themselves and quite spread out- sitting by themselves- and this one [at the end of the three day residential] everyone was in one group at the back, all talking.”

“On the residential the girls all slept in one room, and they ended up putting the mattresses all in one area on the floor, so they could all be together in the same area, rather than on bunk beds.”

“In the evenings they gelled together, they sat and played board games and talked and got on really well. It was a really great experience to see them all gel. Not only that, but I think they have set up a WhatsApp group and I think some of them have stayed in contact with each other since then.”

Comments from Suffolk Family Carers Staff

“There was real improving in confidence. I think it’s those bits you can’t capture- talking on the bus, sleeping in the same area- just being themselves around each other. That is a really big thing for these young people, especially given some of their backgrounds and anxieties and personalities.”

Suffolk Family Carers Staff



REAL ARCHAEOLOGY

Secondly, being responsible for and involved in 'something real' was special and exciting. This was not just an activity, this was archaeological research which brought a higher level of appreciation of and connection to the past.

"They understood the purpose of it, and the value that it is real, which gave a massive sense of responsibility, and you could see when they were digging out bones they weren't hacking away at the bones, they were listening to what the instructor was saying and taking care, especially some of the big bones they got out. They were REALLY excited about it."

"When they had their own little pit and were finding the bones...they did appreciate it was a real life situation. One of them found an amazing copper pin, that was perfectly straight somehow. She was so excited and she realised how old it was. And one of the other young boys started to find some cow ribs, and he wanted to find however many ribs were on a cow- that was his aim- I think he got to twenty ribs, or something like that."

Comments from Suffolk Family Carers Staff



"I really enjoyed digging to search for the finds and cleaning the finds to see all of the patterns"

"I liked finding things like bones/ artefacts and finding out about how it would be like to be an anglo saxon/how they lived"

"At the excavation I found two entire bones and 11 ribs total!"

Comments from young carers who volunteered

LEARNING NEW SKILLS

Thirdly, learning new skills through hands-on learning, giving the young people choice in that learning, was an important and meaningful outcome.

“The instructors and the facilitators were brilliant. They gave the young people the chance to experience what they wanted to experience, within a structured environment.”

“I think [the key benefits for the young people] was learning a new skill, it was experiencing that real life archaeology- that you don’t know what you are going to find. You could have found nothing, you could have found a few little bits of bone, or you could have found something else. It was learning a new skill and introducing them to something that they might not have thought they’d be really into.”

Comments from Suffolk Family Carers Staff

“I have learned how archaeologists do their job and the different ways they can find different materials from a long time ago”

“I liked washing the bones to see what they look like. I liked how I could rest if I needed and work wasn't forced.”

“I learned about the different life styles and the reason why there is a darker patches in the soil. It's because there are ditches/pits w[h]ere rubbish and food waste was thrown.”

“I learned about what bones look like / how to identify them underground. The difference between roman/AS pottery. What cbm means”

Comments from young carers who volunteered

ACHIEVEMENT

Finally, these young people learned that they are capable and can achieve new things. This is significant, as their lives are so focused on caring for others that this can potentially overwhelm their own aspirations.

“It’s great that there were activities for different age ranges- I think it might spark some interest...maybe not with archaeology but knowing that they can come to things and knowing they can go out of their comfort zone and it is not as intimidating as they think it might be.”

“It’s a great and invaluable experience for these young people and it gives them something very different to do- who else can say they’ve been finding bones and cleaning them and not just attending, actually being involved in a real life experience -there’s not many carers out there that can say that.”

Comments from Suffolk Family Carers Staff



“To start off with I was a bit nervous, really excited to do something because obviously not everyone has the opportunity to do something like this and I think after I’m really pleased with myself and what I’ve been able to do, just really happy really.”

“When I came here, at first I was a bit nervous, jittery... now I feel like I’ve had probably one of the best two three days away from anyone in a while now.”



Comments from young carers who volunteered

PRIMARY SCHOOLS

SUMMARY

A summary is presented of the school involvement with *Rendlesham Revealed*, along with comments from the children, teachers and parents collected throughout the Project. Individuals have been kept anonymous.

287 children from 5 primary schools proactively engaged with *Rendlesham Revealed* over 4 years and benefitted from:

- 14 dedicated days on-site at the excavations and fieldwalking, engaging 122 children and 15 teachers from three schools from Rendlesham, Eyke and Wickham Market.
- 3 in-classroom workshops for 90 children at Rendlesham Primary School.
- 1 virtual Q&A session for 30 children at Barnham Primary School.
- 3 experimental archaeology workshops for 90 children from Rushmere Hall school in Ipswich making replica pots for the kiln.

[note: 417 spaces offered in total with 287 individual children engaged of which 122 volunteered with the fieldwork (45 children from Rendlesham school participated multiple times)]

The Project initially engaged with two local primary schools, Rendlesham and Eyke, as they were the closest to the archaeological site. These schools were consulted in the Project's development phase to ensure that activity met the schools' needs, logistically and complimenting the KS2 curriculum. This allowed the Project to also address any barriers to participation. The greatest barrier was financial, therefore the Project organised and funded free transport for all schools. Teacher resource was also a challenge, with the schools relying on teachers or parent helpers to volunteer; this highlights the limited resource schools have outside of daily teaching and influenced the level of engagement from each school, which relied on those individuals' enthusiasm.

Rendlesham school became an informal project partner with a volunteer representative on the Project's Partnership Advisory Group. They chose to engage the same class each year, starting as Year 3s (7-8yrs) until Year 5 (9-10yrs). This provided

RENDELSHAM REVEALED VOLUNTEER SUMMARY: PRIMARY SCHOOLS SUMMARY

a layered learning experience with repetition of skills and knowledge, providing more impact than a one-off trip. Anecdotal evidence from teachers show that these children retained a lot of the information they learned on site, and also shared this with their families, for example trying to find worked flint together on a walk.

Eyke school had limited staff resource therefore sent a different class Year 4 (8-9yrs) class each year.

As the Project progressed, requests were received from other primary schools and the Project additionally involved Barnham with a virtual Q&A session, Wickham Market for 1 day of fieldwork, and Rushmere Hall with experimental archaeology workshops.

While at the archaeological site and during the workshops, the children benefitted from learning more about their local area, making a link to recognising that people lived here before them. Being on-site gave them a different perspective; they could see the scale and picture the settlement more so than if reading in books. All children were treated as part of the on-site team, giving them responsibility to conduct the same archaeological activities as the adult volunteers, working alongside and learning from professionals. The children were taught complex ideas and learnt new terminology. They received the same information as the adult volunteers, such as the history of the site or instructions.

Impact was measured through feedback forms each year, which informed Project activity the following year. The selection of comments presented in this document, especially when read in conjunction with the data presented in the Project's annual evaluation reports, illustrate how projects like *Rendlesham Revealed* can enrich traditional education, providing cross-curriculum learning, communication and questioning skills as well as learning practical skills and using tools.

Below is a short profile of each school based on data from the Office of National Statistics:

- Rendlesham Primary School is part of a multi-academy trust "The Consortium Trust", with an Ofsted rating of 2 Good. There are 300 pupils of which 5.7% are in relative low-income families. 50% of pupils finishing KS2 are meeting the expected standard in reading, writing and maths, this is 10% lower than the national average. 9.7% of pupils have SEN Support. The overall and persistent absence is much lower than England state-funded schools, 4.2% and 5.7% respectively vs 5.9% and 16.2%. For 6.2% of pupils English is not their first language.

RENDLESHAM REVEALED VOLUNTEER SUMMARY: PRIMARY SCHOOLS SUMMARY

- Eyke Primary School is a Church of England state school, with an Ofsted rating of 2 Good. There are 103 pupils of which 13% are in relative low-income families. 72% of pupils finishing KS2 are meeting the expected standard. 14% have SEN Support. The overall absence and persistent absence are 4.4% and 7.5% respectively. For 1.9% English is not their first language.
- Wickham Market Primary School is part of a multi-academy trust “East Anglian Schools Trust”, with an Ofsted rating of 2 Good. There are 167 pupils of which 20% are in relative low-income families. 57% of pupils finishing KS2 are meeting the expected standard. 13.9% have SEN Support. The overall and persistent absence are 5 % and 13.5% respectively. For 0.6% English is not their first language.
- Rushmere Hall Primary School in Ipswich is part of an academy trust “The Eko Trust”, with an Ofsted rating of 2 Good. There are 563 pupils of which 17.3% are in relative low-income families. 67% of pupils finishing KS2 are meeting the expected standard. 16.7% have SEN Support. The overall and persistent absence are 5% and 10.2% respectively. For 16.5% English is not their first language.
- Barnham Primary School is a Church of England state school with an Ofsted rating of 2 Good. There are 157 pupils of which 15.5% are in relative low-income families. 57% of pupils finishing KS2 are meeting the expected standard. 22.9% have SEN support. The overall and persistent absence are 5.4% and 11.2% respectively. For 0.6% English is not their first language.





PUPILS (7-10YRS)

Comments that demonstrate learning:

“Today I learned about holding the trowel sideways.”

“It made me think about how the Anglo-Saxons lived.”

“Understanding how the site works and how the soil colours in the layers.”

“Anglo-Saxons lived 1,500 years ago.”

“I loved shaking the sieve and finding the artefacts.”

“I loved finds washing because we get to see all the objects and wash them with a tooth brush.”

“It was real fun and collabrilitiv.” (collaborative)

“People made the pots 1,000 year ago”

“It made me think about how archaeologists dig things up”

“It made me think about being an arcialojees [archaeologist] when I am older.”



RENDELSHAM REVEALED VOLUNTEER SUMMARY: PRIMARY SCHOOLS PUPILS

The children were asked "How did you feel when you were doing the activity?". Below is a word cloud of their responses.





**“We need more
of this in
education”**

CLASS TEACHERS: RENDLESHAM

“The opportunity we were offered as a school in Rendlesham to take part in such an internationally significant excavation, alongside the most inspiring professionals was unlike anything we had ever been part of before. It is incredibly rare to be offered a chance like this and to be invited back year after year, we are incredibly grateful.

To also have the opportunity to be involved professionally in the partnership group and offer insight into what would be beneficial to the pupils, while learning so much about an area I have grown up in will stay with me forever.

I decided to take the same group of about forty children each year so they could build on their skills over the three years of excavations. This enabled them to really develop their understanding of how a site is excavated and the care and attention to detail.

In particular for me, watching a child who can at times struggle in the classroom with behaviour and concentration and seeing the excitement and focus, questioning and understanding everything, throughout a whole day of active learning was amazing. Certainly something I took back to the classroom as a way to ensure they were given opportunities to be as engaged in learning as possible.

If even one child develops a greater passion for history and/or archaeology as either a hobby or a career then this project will have helped shape a life forever and I think it is inevitable that this will happen due to the conversations that took place both on site and back at school. It has also opened conversations about visiting local sites such as Sutton Hoo and West Stow with their families and the excitement of seeing their own photos in the exhibition was often talked about in school.”

Class teacher at Rendlesham Primary School

RENDLESHAM REVEALED VOLUNTEER SUMMARY: PRIMARY SCHOOLS CLASS TEACHERS

“It was a brilliant experience for the children and the staff – everyone learned so much. Seeing the dig – how it is conducted, gave the children a real insight into how we uncover History. It made the Anglo Saxon era come to life as they handled and cleaned real artefacts. Because our children visited over three years they got to see the journey of the site and our understanding of it. We need more of this in education.”

Class teacher at Rendlesham Primary School

“It was such a brilliant experience for both the children and the adults. I was involved for two years and I was amazed at how the children had remembered so much. All the staff on site were brilliant with us all and allowed everyone to get really involved. It was such a fantastic experience and I got so much out of it as well.”

Grandparent helper volunteer at Rendlesham Primary School



“The children shared many details with their peers when they returned to school. I also had fantastic feedback from parents. The children had remembered the time period, the size of the settlement, methods of construction used with the houses and buildings. They could explain the importance of keeping the finds and how they are cared for.”

RUSHMERE HALL, IPSWICH

“The impact of the day has been seen most visibly in the children's attitudes towards creative and practical work. They are more confident to give creative and practical work a go because they experienced such a boost in self-esteem during their Anglo-saxon day and all the new and tricky skills they learnt there. Our children experienced a day which to them felt vastly different from a normal school day, but still they learnt so much. They were all focused for the entire day, and thrilled by everything they did. Our only stumbling blocks were the initial logistics. For us, cost is always a big issue as we serve a community with a high level of social disadvantage.”

Class Teacher Rushmere Hall Primary School

EYKE

“The children were very enthused by the visit and were able to link their new knowledge to learning we had previously completed in our history topics.

We have a lot of children interested in history - specifically archaeology and with the site being so local, I think this also appealed. As a school we thought it was wonderful to be offered the opportunity to go to the site again as we were very pleased with the trip last year. The needs of the class were met well. The sessions were pitched at the right level and kept the children engaged at all times.

Children came away from the trip wanting to dig the school field! They basically came away very interested to learn more about archaeology and unearthing special finds. The hands on approach allows the children to experience history in a different way.”

Class Teacher Eyke Primary School



“Being involved in something that is real, really helps to enrich the curriculum.”

PARENTS

“My daughter has been down to the dig site a few times and every time she has come back so happy and buzzing. The first time she went a few years ago to now she still talks about each time and how much she loved it and things they found each time. She has expressed that this is something she would like to look into one day when she’s older.”

“My daughter has been to the site several times and has always loved it. She really enjoyed getting involved, cleaning and dusting items and the possibility of discovering something for herself.”

“My granddaughter went to the site with her school and had a very interesting time. She loves History and to have such a hands on experience was fantastic.”

“Really engaging and interactive that fed the childrens imagine. Really educational and fun for the children.”

“As a parent of a child who took part in the excavations, I was fascinated to hear from her what she had experienced and the amazing chance she had been given. Being given the chance to return to the site caused great excitement each year and I was so interested in hearing how hands on she was allowed to be on the site. She loved having the chance to work with archaeologists and experts and was particularly enthralled by digging up bones and washing them afterwards.

Whenever we walk across the fields now we are always looking for teeth, flint and everything has to be picked up and checked! I cannot thank you enough for giving her this opportunity. For now she recognises that she has been very lucky to experience it and talks very animatedly about the dig; she is too young to truly understand the significance of what she has been part of, but wow, it will be something that she can talk about for years to come!”

GENERAL PUBLIC

SUMMARY

311 members of the general public were engaged to volunteer with *Rendlesham Revealed* through the fieldwork programme over three years, plus additional workshops and talks, as well as post-excavation at the archaeological contractor's warehouse and experimental archaeology.

Three case studies of volunteers from the general public are presented, based on feedback from interviews. Two 1-1 interviews and one joint father/son interview were held. These volunteers have committed a different amount of volunteer time and had different motivations for volunteering. The interviews were held 4 months after the end of the final fieldwork season.

- Paul Crossman is a full time Orthopaedic Surgeon for the NHS. He volunteered for 36 days over 3 years. (1-1 interview)
- Gill Barnett volunteered for 20 days over 2 years. Gill started volunteering with the Project while she was making the decision whether to take early retirement after 37 years in a high-stress full time office job. (1-1 interview)
- Dave and Charlie Hughes, father (full-time engineer) and son (student) volunteered for a total of two days. (joint interview)

Although all four people had different personal motivations for volunteering, they all had a strong interest in history. The practical experience digging archaeology and learning directly from academics and professionals made the experience special and of real value. It took their understanding of heritage beyond books and TV to a much more real and profound experience. They all talked in detail about their new practical skills and confidence to continue with archaeology in the future.

Community was a common theme in the interviews. Not just meeting new people but becoming part of a network where everyone had a common interest and being accepted. They have all joined the local amateur archaeology group since the project, and two of them have volunteered with other projects already.

Making connections with the local area was also important. Community is a big part of achieving this, along with understanding more about the local heritage itself. This was a strong motivator for Paul in particular, especially as full time work can be an

RENDELESHAM REVEALED VOLUNTEER CASE STUDIES: GENERAL PUBLIC SUMMARY

obstacle. Gill and Paul both talked about how being on site excavating was respite from incredibly stressful and demanding jobs.

They all learned practical skills in field archaeology; those who volunteered for multiple days built on their knowledge, consistently using these new skills, progressing onto more complex tasks such as recording - taking measurements, drawing diagrams and completing context sheets.

For Charlie, the Project helped his career aspirations fall into place as he came to the realisation that he wanted to pursue archaeology as a career after finishing his history degree at the local university. This realisation for him was a big achievement and a turning point; his interest could become a practical occupation. By volunteering, he was able to get a taste of what it might be like to be an archaeologist, he also benefitted from speaking to and learning from other volunteers, some quite experienced, as well as professional archaeologists and academics.

Sharing their experiences with others was important to all of them, the online blogs and booklet were especially useful to help them do this. It cemented their experience and deepened their bonds with family and friends. For Dave and Charlie, volunteering was something they could do and enjoy together as father and son – for Dave having something to do with his son now he is older was important for their relationship.





CASE STUDY: GENERAL PUBLIC

DAVE & CHARLIE HUGHES

Dave and Charlie are a father and son team who volunteered for two days at the excavations in 2023.

The conversations we had with them during their first day on site really stood out and we wanted to take the opportunity to talk to them some more. We caught up with them both for an online video chat in March 2024.

Dave works as an engineer and has worked in Telecoms. He has always had an interest in history and this love has been passed to his son Charlie who is in the final three months of a history degree at Essex University.

Charlie used to volunteer at Framlingham Castle where he saw reenactors which inspired him to join 'Wuffa', a local costume re enactor group. *"It is a form of experimental archaeology as you're exploring what might have been used and what works with costumes."*

They both loved watching Time Team together, which got them "hooked" onto archaeology.

"Finding out I want to have a go at archaeology as a potential career. I would consider that an achievement."

- Charlie

Charlie said: *"The idea of finding the little bits and pieces from 1000 years ago that has just been thrown away and it's not been touched at all until I have touched it fascinated me. I'm hooked."*

Dave's wife booked them both in to volunteer for the *Rendlesham Revealed* excavations, as Dave and Charlie were interested to learn more about the archaeological process. *"We thought it would be just good fun."*

Charlie and Dave enthusiastically reminisced about their experiences and the wide range of highlights to choose from after working in such a different environment at the excavations.

"We did hoeing, excavating and sieving. We learnt so much from others." - Charlie

"We worked hard, you definitely knew you had done a days work." - Dave

In a very short amount of time volunteering in the excavations, Charlie and Dave feel that they have a much a greater understanding of the skills needed to work in archaeology. Charlie explained what he learned: *"Definitely how to get the measure of soil. Or more specifically how the colours of the soil can tell you whether it has been tampered with by humans or not. The other experience that we had was learning how to use the tools. I also liked to know about the context of where we were digging".*

An unforgettable moment for Charlie was making his first discovery:

"When we started the hoeing and I found a massive piece of bone. The first time you find something and it's pretty cool. You can feel it. You realise the significance of how long it has been there".

They were both amused about the way archaeology sparks some really interesting debates between professionals. *"Another thing I liked was understanding that if you asked two experienced archaeologists you could guarantee to get different answers because they certainly didn't agree. Linzi was sure I'd found the rim of a cup and Chris assured me it was charred bone."*

They also highlighted their learning about wider aspects of the techniques used on site and the conversations that they were able to have during breaks to develop their knowledge further. *"I found the use of drones fascinating too. It makes aerial views so accessible. We just learned so much more about what was involved."*

Meeting new people and being alongside so many different characters all with differing backgrounds was also an important experience.

"Another real highlight for me was being in the trench with the other two very very experienced amateur archaeologists. Just because the brains that I could pick and gain so much information about archaeology and how it is done. Telling them about my love of history and their enthusiasm to hear my experiences." - Charlie

Charlie told us about his biggest achievement from volunteering. *"Finding out that I want to have a go at archaeology as a potential career, that was definitely something that I discovered. I would consider that as an achievement."*

Dave discussed very openly the way this volunteer experience has impacted on Charlie's outlooks and next steps in life. *"You're thinking 'what are you going to do with your life' and what you found was a mix of things that really interested you. Working outside, doing something practical, doing something with history, thinking about the past and how you review it. It might be hard to get a job there, but we've already got some irons in the fire now. It is an achievement, it's important to find something that you want to target for your career."*

We remember speaking to Charlie and Dave on their first day volunteering, after hours of being on-site windswept and drizzled on, and hearing about what this experience had meant to them. Months later, hearing Charlie still talk with the same passion and excitement about how eight hours of volunteering could have changed the course of his career really shows the power of a project like this.

Since volunteering, both Dave and Charlie have spoken to the archaeological contractor about other potential volunteering, and they have also joined the local amateur archaeology group 'Suffolk Archaeological Field Group'. *"We haven't done much with them yet, but with the pressure of University and things we haven't had the time but they were two very practical things that we did after the excavations."*

"There is something about bringing different groups of society together for a common project. So you've got the uber nerdy archaeologists and you've got the newbies like us and kids and mental health groups and because you mix everyone together you're not having to read a book about it. You can just explore it hands on and be left with a pretty good idea of how field archaeology works. There were three father and child teams there when I was there, and I think having something to do with your child when they are older really made me smile."

- Dave



CASE STUDY: GENERAL PUBLIC

PAUL CROSSMAN

Paul volunteered for a total of 36 days over three years. He started in 2021 for one day *“I did some of the post-excavation work, mainly cleaning and labelling”*. He then signed up to the excavations in 2022 for 13 days and 2023 for 18 days. Paul also volunteered 2 days with the geophysical survey and 2 days with the fieldwalking survey.

Paul has worked in the public health services for 30 years and is a Consultant Orthopaedic Surgeon for the NHS at Ipswich hospital – this came in handy when human remains were unearthed at Rendlesham in the final year.

While he finds his job rewarding, it is incredibly stressful especially with the background of challenges relating to management and service organisation. *“I love the work and I enjoy the practical side of surgery, obviously there are stresses and strains. The way the NHS is set up its sometimes difficult to do the work”*.

“It helps me as an individual to make connections with the locality.”

While talking to Paul, it was obvious that he is very dedicated to his work in the NHS, which has been such a strong focus in his life. However, it has left him a little isolated from the place where he lives. Paul talks about community and identity in his locality being difficult to find outside of work. *Rendlesham Revealed* has given him a new path to feel more connected to where he lives by learning about its history, and meeting a new group of people and becoming part of a network of people that share his interests.

Paul tells us why he chose to volunteer with the Rendlesham Revealed project in the very little spare time that he has. *“There are a number of reasons. I am interested in historical things in general and I am also interested in the local area [of Ipswich and Suffolk] as I grew up in Sussex. I’ve worked in lots of different places, which negates your interest in locality and prioritises work. This was a good opportunity to find out more about Suffolk. This project gives a wider perspective to the headline historical things like the Sutton Hoo ship burials. And Ipswich itself is connected [to Rendlesham]. It helps me as an individual to make connections with the locality. I haven’t lived in Sussex for 30 years, but I still retain that connection – the South Downs is like a museum you walk from one hillfort to another. Having done Rendlesham you can enjoy a similar experience here.”*

It was the practical experience in real-time that made volunteering fulfilling.



“You are doing something that is good for you, it’s a practical achievement. You’re not just reading books or watching telly, actually doing it is immeasurably more fulfilling. I still have it very much in my mind.”

Paul explains about his new skills in archaeology *“It’s given me an introductory level and equipped me to volunteer for future projects of this sort. [I learned] how to get a neat, straight section and do a section drawing and record it.”*

Paul now feels more confident for future volunteering *“if they say ‘here’s your line for the section, you can excavate this in spits’ I think I can participate in that sort of thing. I’ve acquired skills I’m going to use for the rest of my life.”*

Meeting new people was also an important part of Paul’s volunteering experience. *“You meet other people in a situation that isn’t Dr/Patient or colleague to colleague. You can step out of the roles that you have, it’s a sort of respite, there’s a refreshment about that.”*

We asked Paul to tell us his biggest highlights volunteering with the project and he described several moments that were meaningful to him:

“There were lots of things. I think right at the end, the discovery of the foundations of a building, that’s got to be one of them.”

“In 2022, the first morning I went there, Chris and Linzi were giving their briefing talk at the beginning and we stood at the end of the hall [foundations] and could see the outline of the hall. I think that was almost breath-taking. It was a real privilege to be able to see it in person to be able to stand on the edge of a trench, you can see photos but to be able to be there, that’s how I feel that the volunteering was an incredible opportunity for people like me, I’m not just reading a book, I’ve actually seen it.”

“At the end of the hall was a Neolithic pit and I dug the other half. I don’t know how to describe it. It was a profoundly moving experience, another example of something that probably wouldn’t mean very much if I saw it in a cabinet in a museum, but seeing where it was in the ground in the middle of the hall and seeing the bits of pot and worked flint, that was very profound and an interesting and moving experience.”



“The copper alloy pin I found in the midden in 2022, its surprising how a tiny little pin can be exciting, you see these things in a cabinet in a museum, but when you see it in the ground among an astounding mass of animal skeletal material and oyster shell, it felt like a sort of connection, it was something which hasn’t been disturbed for that period of time and had just been dumped there and it felt like an end result of an action which had taken place 1,400 years ago and it made you wonder how does a dress pin get in among all the animal bone, there must be a story.”

RENDLESHAM REVEALED VOLUNTEER CASE STUDIES: GENERAL PUBLIC
CASE STUDY: PAUL CROSSMAN

We talked about the working model of volunteers supported by a small team of professionals *“It was a tremendous privilege [to work with] academic archaeologists at the top of their game and ask them questions, and professionals like Linzi and Matt so skilled in what they do, and all the organisation from the county council. My experience was superb”.*

Paul reflects on how enjoyable it has been to share his experience *“I have a big family, lots of nephews and nieces, and they all enjoy hearing about this sort of thing, as do the people at work”.*

Paul has gone on to volunteer with another project doing some post-excavation work at Freston, and he has joined the local amateur archaeology group ‘Suffolk Archaeological Field Group’. *“I’ve done the magnetometry survey at Freston, Bullcamp and Tattlingstone. It is definitely something I am going to pursue.”*

“The project enabled me to get more of an insight as a lay person. Museums are fantastic but this has an impact that is several orders of magnitude greater. It makes you feel something about the people that were there, something about human activity, what it means to be human”.





“It was such a privilege to dig on a site like that, that you never think you’ll be able to do.”

CASE STUDY: GENERAL PUBLIC GILL BARNETT

Gill volunteered for a total of 20 days over three years, starting with four days in 2022 and 14 days in 2023 at the excavations and 2 days with the fieldwalking survey.

We last met Gill in the middle of a muddy field, trowel in hand, excavating archaeology. Today we are in the warm offices having a chat over a cuppa to hear about her experience volunteering for *Rendlesham Revealed*.

We asked Gill about herself and why she decided to volunteer. “When I left school in the early 80s I wanted to be an archaeologist, but it was a time where there was lots of unemployment so I had to just get any job and I went into banking.”

Gill tried to keep in touch with her passion and in her mid-40s she enrolled on a distance learning course in archaeology with University of Leicester while still working full time.

“I left school with no A-levels, only O-levels, so to be able to do that was massive...but to complete the course I had to get fieldwork experience which was tricky with a full-time job and the fees were put up so I couldn’t justify it.”

Last year, Gill chose early retirement after working a high-stress office job for 37 years. “*Rendlesham was a good stepping stone away from the stress of work while I made the decision to finish working. I didn’t realise how much pressure work, and the stress of working through covid, had put on me until after I stepped away. I knew I had to finish working. The dig [at Rendlesham] gave me time to do something completely for me and be a bit selfish with my time. It was a nice breather after all that stress.*”

Gill first heard about the Rendlesham Revealed project from the local amateur archaeology group. *“I used to belong to the group 20 years ago, and so after I retired I rejoined and then heard about Rendlesham through them.”*

Gill compared her time volunteering at Rendlesham with a previous experience where she did a few days digging at Hungate in York *“it was a birthday present for me from my husband years ago, but the cost of it! A lot of other projects charge a lot and people wouldn’t have been able to afford that. Rendlesham was really good value, it wasn’t expensive, so it was more accessible.”*

Gill described her experience volunteering with the fieldwork at Rendlesham:

“I didn’t have confidence [at first] and felt like everyone else would know more than me, but you weren’t thrown in the deep end. The first year I could only do a couple of days as I was still working – it was so popular, I didn’t realise how popular it was so I grabbed what [volunteer days] I could. The second year I booked so many more days.”

“A big worry for me was seeing the different colours of the soil. I couldn’t see the different colours initially or if the light changed in the afternoon, but you could feel the difference when digging.”

“Linzi, Matt and Bethan [the staff with the archaeological contractor] were incredibly helpful. They supervised with every stage of each section [of the ditch I was digging], they were telling you how far to dig with each spit. [The next year] I dug some of the ditch again so I remembered and had continuity. I remembered the shape of the ditch and what to look out for. It was really useful to do the same ditch further along the second year and felt like I got more confidence.”

“Getting back into archaeology and volunteering locally has been brilliant. Rendlesham was just so good because you felt like you were actually being trained at the same time and felt like you were really learning how to do it properly.”





“Gill was also taught how to complete drawings of the sections which she had excavated and recorded the context sheets for the first time. *“I had never done any [archaeological] drawings before, I took the measurements and drew the diagram. I did the same in my second year so there was some familiarity and I built on this by learning how to also do the context sheets.”*

“I booked so many sessions [in my second year] so I felt like I was getting consistent knowledge and I saw the knowledge build. It was very intense at the end. I loved it, loved the people.”

Gill explained how her experience at Rendlesham taught her best practice and the etiquette of working on an archaeological site, which has helped her when volunteering in other similar projects. *“Chris [the site director and academic advisor] was strict with how it was all done, but that was good training, and the etiquette of being on site such as clearing up when you have breaks, this was really good best practice.”* Gill went on to volunteer with a different project elsewhere in Suffolk the following year, she said *“I remembered everything [from Rendlesham] and so it wasn’t daunting, as I knew more so didn’t feel out of place on site.”*

We discussed the working model used to run the site, which operated with a large cohort of volunteers conducting the actual fieldwork, with support and training from a small team of professionals. *“Yes, it worked because you went into it feeling like you weren’t the only beginner, one of many rather than the only one that didn’t have a lot of experience. Everyone was so patient of the volunteers, endlessly patient, all the questions we were asking...yes I felt supported.”*

Gill reflected on the social aspect of volunteering and this new community of which she is now part. *“Socialising was an important part for me. It was really nice at the breaks to meet other people and I met other members of the [local amateur] field group that I hadn’t come across before. Our paths have crossed again at other things.”*

“The more knowledge you build up the more confident you feel doing other things. For me it’s the confidence of being an amateur but building up that knowledge so you don’t feel like you’ll be a hindrance and you feel like you can help them.”



“The more knowledge you build up the more confident you feel doing other things. For me it’s the confidence of being an amateur but building up that knowledge so you don’t feel like you’ll be a hindrance and you feel like you can help them.”

Since volunteering at Rendlesham, Gill has had the confidence to volunteer elsewhere, including the county’s archaeological archives repacking artefacts, and at a research dig at Freston in Suffolk led by MacMaster University, where she joined a team of students, other volunteers, and commercial contractors to dig a Neolithic causewayed enclosure.

Gill tells us about the wider network she has become a part of since volunteering at Rendlesham: *“I met Sam [the SCC Archaeological Archives Officer] at Rendlesham and I am now volunteering in the archive once a week. I met Megan [Finds supervisor for the archaeological contractor] on site at Rendlesham and she was at Freston doing the environmental processing [when I volunteered there].”* Gill also volunteers with the AONB and Suffolk Wildlife Trust.

Gill talked about a “ripple effect” and sharing her experience with her family. *“Everyday Mum and Dad want to know [what I had been doing]. They live in Sheffield and are in their 80s and 90s and are just as interested and I was sending them the weekly blog articles and the book. My uncle is in his 90s. He always asks me about what I’ve been doing. I talk to him on the phone but for him to get something [the book] through the post he can picture and visualise it all. Even my husband who is not into archaeology at all asked me all about it when I got home each day. My parents came down for Christmas and we went out and came back via Rendlesham and I showed them the field.”*

“I felt really honoured to have been part of it because it was so special and to let loose volunteers on a site that is so special is a once in a lifetime chance. I wonder if people outside [the Project] think ‘how are volunteers allowed to be on site if it’s that important?’ but it’s very structured with training and mentoring. You don’t feel like someone is looking over your shoulder while digging but there is tight control, if that’s the right word, its professionally done in a nice way to a high standard.”

UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

SUMMARY

In 2023, ten undergraduate students and three professors from Institute of Archaeology, University College London (UCL) joined the volunteer team at Rendlesham for four weeks. This was the first time UCL students have been able to participate with the *Rendlesham Revealed* project, as the Covid-19 pandemic and related internal policies prevented them from attending the fieldwork in previous years as originally planned.

UCL contributed in-kind contributions equivalent to the value of £7,950 for the students' accommodation and travel. They also contributed over 1,000 volunteer hours, valuing £25,500 [*based on National Lottery Heritage Fund volunteer time values].

All students were year 1 and year 2 undergraduates, aged 19-50yrs, most in their 20s and a few mature students. There was a mix of international and UK students. They had some experience of fieldwork previously, most having at least undertaken a 10-day field school as part of their degree.

On-site at Rendlesham, the students focussed on one of the large trenches; they had continuity of features, excavating and recording from beginning to end. UCL staff trained and supervised the students directly day-to-day, with overall archaeological direction from the Project team. In time, the right balance was struck between integrating the students with the rest of the site and giving UCL space to deliver the student training in excavation, which was their priority.

The Project team offered opportunities for involvement in finds processing and fieldwalking. Career-themed lunchtime talks were delivered by the Project team, such as the planning system, commercial archaeology, archives and how to use finds handling in community archaeology, as well as specialists talks on Anglo-Saxon artefacts and metalworking analysis.

The UCL Fieldwork Co-ordinator described the experience at Rendlesham: *“The work at Rendlesham was of a different nature and took in more elements of archaeological fieldwork – especially having the chance to work with volunteers and undertake fieldwalking – neither of which any of the students had done before. It helped them to develop their key excavation skills, fieldwalking, post excavation and working with a range of other people.”*

Team work and collaboration was an important aspect for the students:

“The team! Everyone is nice and willing to offer help. The specialists and staff are professional and friendly.”

“I still need to speed up when hoeing. The situation was improved when having people work together with me.”

“Fieldwork techniques, team collaboration skill all got improved.”

Both UCL staff and students identified some unexpected benefits of being part of a community project:

“It certainly gave the project a different feel, a more cohesive feel, to other projects they have been on”.

UCL Fieldwork Co-ordinator

“I loved to talk with the community. Some of them are local people whom also shared knowledge about the local history and their own feelings about the project to us. I think this is better for us to understand the local historical and archaeological background and better contribute to this community project.”

Student



RENDELSHAM REVEALED VOLUNTEER SUMMARY: UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

When asked what could be improved, the UCL Fieldwork Co-ordinator suggested: *“If the students could stay longer and be more involved with maybe the post excavation side of the work and be more integrated into the community/volunteer side of the project”*.

Involving UCL with the *Rendlesham Revealed* project could be considered a successful pilot trialling the idea of integrating community archaeology with university student fieldwork.

Since their time on-site at Rendlesham, UCL has shown enthusiasm to formally develop on this new partnership with Suffolk County Council Archaeological Service and have proposed to bring the student annual fieldwork programme to Suffolk. This could bring a unique opportunity for SCCAS to develop further community engagement opportunities and would in-turn expand UCL’s core learning requirements.

“As a year 1 student at that time, I learned how to do the trowelling and section drawing and finished the context sheet, also, since we find pottery, I learned how to lift the artefact properly.”

- Student

