

<b>Name</b>	<b>Sandra</b>
<b>Age</b>	<b>21-30</b>
<b>Position</b>	<b>Site Supervisor, Archaeological Unit</b>
<b>Disability</b>	<b>RSI, Diabetes</b>

I went into archaeology out of personal interest. I had studied Classics since the age of 13 and wanted to find out the background to their arguments, see where they got their information from. I graduated in 1997, worked as a field archaeologist after that and then did an MA in Archaeology. As a student I did summer excavations about a week long, although I did help out with an amateur group when I was about 16. I have been working for various Units doing watching briefs and excavations. For the last couple of years I have been employed as a working site supervisor, it includes digging. It was after my MA that I worked all through the winter for one Unit and that is when my problems started; digging hard ground did not help.

I am diabetic, insulin dependent since the age of 10. Generally that has not affected my working life. I have only experienced one problem with the diabetes. I had low blood sugar on site one time. I made the mistake of not telling the site supervisor and he got quite upset about it when he found out. He said, as a diabetic, I should not be working in the field, I should be office-based; an unknowing sort of comment. Fortunately, the other archaeologists I was working with said: 'No, she can do fieldwork perfectly well'. I just have to make sure when I go on to Watching Briefs that the contractors let me know when they are going to stop for lunch. The problem is when they say they will stop for lunch, they keep going. I sometimes ignore the rules about not eating on site. I have dug in the Caribbean and done research projects in Mali in Africa and it has not been a great problem.

The other problem I have now is a form of RSI in my wrists which I think has built up through excavation work. My joints at the moment make it too painful for me to dig or type, which affects my work as an archaeologist. I have had this for a couple of years. I was eventually made redundant. The specialists say I have slightly loose joints, which means I would need to be a bit stronger to do the kind of work I have been doing. The reason I have built this up, and other people have not, is that I have a slight weakness in my wrists, a congenital condition. It only came to the fore by doing heavy excavation work. At first, they put me on more gentle duties. For one Unit it was the good old-fashioned system where one person does drawing and another person does digging, so that helped. It came back again about 7 or 8 months later. I was at the stage of possibly getting a permanent job and did not want to

bring up the problem. I kept working through it, but it just got too bad. Trouble is, everyone is so worried about losing their job in archaeology that you keep pushing these things. You say, 'Oh, I'll rest it later and sort it out then' without realising that the longer you go with a problem, the more damage you do. They were slightly awkward to start with and said to take it easy on site. Trouble was, it was difficult to take it easy on the site I was on. Eventually they realised it was a serious problem, so they took me into the office and tried to give me desk-based work. It got to the stage where typing was a problem, so they got me some voice-activated software. I felt a bit self-conscious using that. But they did do everything to try and make it possible for me to work. They only laid me off after I had had the 28 weeks of sick pay, so they were within the legislation and they had tried.

I want to stay in archaeology. I have tried doing other things at times, but I missed it. I think there is a way round my problems, so I am looking at various teaching options or publishing. At the moment I am trying to get some lecturing work so I that do not have to use my wrists too much. Then I can have some physiotherapy to get them back to normal. At the moment I cannot go and dig, it is just not possible. It would not be fair to other people wanting digging jobs if I went for that sort of work.

I have no regrets about doing archaeology. I was warned what it was like from the start when I was 16 doing excavations. They gave me the worst jobs to try and put me off. They told me that I would have no money and end up with all these aches and pains, but you do not listen at that age. My only regret is that I did not know when to stop when I had problems. I was too worried about losing my job. I'm fortunate, I live with my boyfriend and he can cover the rent.