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<b>Age</b>	<b>45-60</b>
<b>Position</b>	<b>Senior Archaeologist, Government Agency</b>
<b>Disability</b>	<b>Restricted Mobility – crutches/wheelchair user</b>

I have been interested in what I would call archaeology, which on the whole has more to do with landscapes and buildings than excavation, since I was very young. I did all the things you do as a schoolboy and went as a volunteer on excavations without any idea that there was a profession in it. I did ask when I was at school and I was told that there were only 20 jobs in archaeology in the country. I was pointed in another direction. Rescue archaeology was just coming in and, although I did not do archaeology as a first degree, I discovered that I could do archaeology as an amateur. There was also potential for employment in the area where I was at University. I did an MA in it and, on the strength of that, I went to work for the local Archaeological Trust straight out of University. There was a short period when (in case it turned out that there was no work in archaeology after all) I was doing a PGCE and working at the Trust at the same time. I worked for the Trust for several years and then did several other archaeological jobs, including consultancy work, between 1978 and 1986. Then I got a job with my current employer, and I have been there ever since.

I had a road traffic accident whilst travelling on business in 1996 which disabled me. I was in collision with another car. I was in intensive care for a long period, had many operations and was off work for 18 months. I had multiple fractures. Basically, I am non-weight bearing on one leg. I have problems with my spine and arms, and I had a head injury. The situation has been complicated by three major falls since the accident. Since my accident I have worked a nominal three-day week. After my most recent fall I was advised to adopt a more sensible life-style, which meant I had to obtain a 'mobility system' (adapted car and wheelchair combo) for use outside. My employer required me to take more serious account of health and safety procedures whilst working.

After a period doing casework myself, in the years before the accident I was working on national policy issues, as well as organising and supervising casework. I worked on archaeological designation over a large region of the country and held various national policy briefs. That is what I was doing when I had the accident. When I came back after 18 months, I obviously could not carry on my casework activities because that included not only management, but also visiting sites. Most of the policy briefs remained and for a year or so, I did hold on to them, often training successors.

However, one-by-one they have been taken away from me. I am not sure if this was to do with my accident. Certainly there were issues about me not being able to get into the office as often as would have been ideal, and I certainly lost any appetite I had had previously for 'office politics'. In place of these briefs I was given a number of individual projects to do. The first was in the professional training field, where I was involved in designing, commissioning and supervising various initiatives. But after a couple of years, I made a personal decision not to continue with this work because I felt I wanted to achieve certain academic goals and I have subsequently undertaken more academic projects.

My employers have been superb. One of the benefits of working for a government agency is that they have certain rules and structures embedded which are put into action when something terrible happens. As a result, I think I have been extremely well treated. They have bent over backwards for me and will, I hope, continue to do so. Whether this is a conscious policy tailored to me as an individual or a series of automatic procedures that would apply to anyone, I do not know. The way I have been treated is very paternal and rather old-fashioned. It is like the miners who were disabled down the pit. They were given an oily rag and told to clean machinery, keep turning up and collect their salary. I do not resent that too much. I know that most archaeological employers would have found it difficult to continue to employ me in any professional capacity. I suspect, at best, I would have been offered employment as a secretary or in some other general role. There was some of that kind of talk when I first came out of hospital.

People's attitudes to me have been very interesting. You cannot go through something like this without people's attitudes to you changing. I know that, in professional terms, the perception that I cannot manage things has ruled me out of many things, and that is not unreasonable. There are however a range of archaeological activities that people with physical disabilities can do. Fortunately for me, my employers recognised that there are things that I can do quite well. They look out for interesting jobs for me to do and it has been very pleasant and acceptable work and I am not unhappy about that. They are prepared to give me quite a lot of lee-way. The down-side is that, inevitably, you are treated differently. In practice, you are not in the same position as your colleagues, particularly where promotion and job security are concerned. I sometimes feel the insecurity of my position difficult to cope with, but I am aware that many able-bodied archaeologists make a much more precarious living than I do. I have approached my personnel department and managers about this, and their advice was to relax and not worry about it as I still had a decent salary, nor to worry about what I will be doing the week after next because they will ensure that I am

treated the same way as everyone else in any institutional crisis. This feels, nevertheless, rather different to my previous situation, where I was used to continually having to justify my salary and my activity to managers.

I cannot go back either to field-work, or to casework that involves visiting all types of sites and buildings. I have visited a number of excavations since I became disabled and there have been difficulties. To overcome these difficulties I might have to do things that the Health and Safety Officer would say I should not do. The first question I have to ask myself if there is an excavation or site nearby is whether this is an official visit. That would mean that my employers will be responsible if I do damage to myself or someone else and I have to take that into account. Such judgements can be quite hard to weigh up. There are physical difficulties getting across a field to an excavation and some fields you cannot get across at all on sticks, never mind in a wheelchair. With my 4 wheel-drive, however, I can now drive to the trench edge and wind down the window. But this is often not acceptable. I can get to, and study, some types of sites. In particular certain aspects of practical fieldwork in buildings and landscape archaeology are still open to me.

This has made me think hard what archaeology is about in the first place. Although I have directed a couple of excavations, I have never considered myself to be an excavator. I have always taken excavation data and analysed it. To me, that is the main work of an archaeologist. The mechanical skills of excavation can be learnt relatively quickly, whereas your understanding of what has been excavated develops continuously. In ten years of being disabled I have never been held up by an inability to get hold of the data on which to undertake archaeological analyses. There have been occasions, however, when I have had to ask friends to take photographs for me of places that I cannot reach, such as views from church towers. How I could get that particular information otherwise, I am not quite sure. But then, an able-bodied archaeologist with Vertigo would not want to take pictures from church towers anyway. A good question to ask would be: could someone who is disabled and wants to be an archaeologist access *the results* of fieldwork? For my definition of archaeology, that is the most important thing. If I have found limitations in my work, it has been that I have been unable to access very specific information quickly in the field. Typically I have not been able to get up the stairs or across a field to see something. Usually this is just a matter of needing to see and understand a particular detail. Consequently, I have not felt that the kind of research I do, is overly affected by my disability. If I did, I would have to find something else to do.

I go to conferences, but do not usually go on the field trips. Now I sometimes follow in my car. Although the coaches can physically take disabled people, I have found that coach drivers frequently say that they are not insured to do so. As I understand it they mean that they/their company are not insured for disabled people getting on and off the coach safely. I have been told they would have to take out special insurance to do that. The result is that you find the responsibility for organising it is shifted from them, to you. I am alright, I now have a car and there are often ways around these problems on the day. The real power is with the insurers. I'm sure they would provide cover if large numbers were requesting it for a containable, repeated risk. I suspect, however, a single archaeologist going to a conference is not worth it for the bus-company or their insurers, and if extra cover were to be obtained, it would be at the initiative and expense of the conference organisers. I think there is quite a tension between inclusiveness as such and what Health and Safety and the insurers will allow.

I have not encountered any hostility from my colleagues, but you do encounter isolation. People undoubtedly treat you differently and some people, a noticeable minority, would rather not deal with you at all. I think the problem is that they do not know what to say. They will cross the street because they feel intimidated, but this is only a noticeable minority. Other people will self-consciously approach you and then not know what to say. They are aware that they must not treat you differently, but they cannot think of anything to say to you. There is a substantial difference in whether I meet people in my wheelchair or on sticks. If on sticks, then people are likely to wait to see if I can do something before deciding to offer me help; they give you some choice. If I am in a wheelchair, I find I do not have this choice. An assumption is made that someone must be looking after me, even though I have always powered my own wheelchairs, either manually or automatically. What they want to know is not what my problem is, but who is looking after me. Take what happened at lunch for example. I was in my wheelchair in a crowded area and, having been through the buffet, I parked my wheelchair out of the way to wait for you to arrive with your meal before moving off to find a table. A kind, concerned, lady who was clearly worried about my predicament, as she could see there were few tables and she may have made the assumption that I had parked myself because there was no table for me to go to with my meal. But when she approached me, what she wanted to know was not whether I was in any difficulty (which I was not) but who I was with. When I pointed you out, she never spoke to me again, only to you. If she had said what was really on her mind and discussed it with me, we could have sorted out the matter out immediately, but because of a series of preconceptions about people in wheelchairs, it did not happen. I am left feeling disempowered because there is no proper negotiation between me and

the other person. In this case there was no problem because as a result of her discussion with you, the concerned lady gave up the seat she had 'reserved' so we got a table in the restaurant. Special treatment again! I find that, if I am on sticks, people do not make these sorts of automatic assumption. In fact, they often think that I have been in a skiing accident. They tell you long stories of how difficult they found being on sticks for six weeks after their accidents. Such encounters are very frequent, and usually very friendly and well-meant. And people get so embarrassed when they find out that it is permanent in my case that I often try not to reveal it.

I now have an enormously different outlook on life as a result of the accident. Becoming disabled has gone alongside enormous changes in my personal circumstances. I think that I have relaxed a lot and got things more in perspective than I used to have. I find I now have to rely on other people and it has made me more trusting of them. People have said to me that it has helped me develop more, mature and grow up. It has been good for me almost!

The single word that describes my experience of being made disabled in mid-life is isolation. It puts a fence around you and the question is how you cope with that isolation. People can respond in two ways. They can either start designing new bridges between themselves and their world, or they can go very inward and implode in on themselves. I have seen both responses amongst people who have been made disabled. I do not know about people who have been disabled from birth; that is probably different? In professional terms, I do not feel that I have had an enormously negative experience because of my disability, rather the reverse. The various changes in my life have resulted in my getting even greater satisfaction from my archaeology. I think I have a more rounded and a richer appreciation and understanding of the struggles of past people as a result.