

# AMPHORA

(Authentic and Meaningful Participation in Heritage or Related Activities) for mental health and wellbeing



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Archaeology, heritage and the historic environment more broadly are increasingly recognised as powerful non-medical tools in the delivery of benefits for community mental health and wellbeing. Until recently the overwhelming majority of evidence cited in support of this has, however, been anecdotal and heritage professionals have not always recognised the importance of working with experts in mental health and evaluation.



*The three AMPHORA toolkits offer guidance to support service providers, to help social prescribers, and empower potential participants. Credit: Illustrations by VickiHerring.com*

Archaeology as a therapeutic intervention for veterans achieved a significant public profile through the work of Operation Nightingale from 2011, and the first large-scale study of psychological results from veterans participating on archaeological excavation (Everill, Bennett and Burnell 2020) demonstrate clear decreases in the severity of the symptoms of depression and anxiety, and of feelings of isolation and lack of self-worth, along with an increase in mental

wellbeing and sense of value. Work with UK, Georgian and Ukrainian veterans at the site of Nokalakevi in Georgia further demonstrated the enormous potential for archaeology as a non-medical therapeutic intervention (Everill et al 2022).

More recently, the edited volume *Archaeology, Heritage, and Wellbeing* (Everill and Burnell 2022) included a range of different perspectives which highlight the many ways in which the historic environment can support mental health/wellbeing, including among indigenous and marginalised communities. The book also provides an introduction to psychological concepts and measures for archaeologists/heritage professionals, as well as introducing mental health specialists to archaeology in an attempt to bridge the disciplinary divide.

## The AMPHORA guidelines

Interdisciplinary research by the authors has led to the production of guidelines designed to unlock the full therapeutic potential of the historic environment through *Authentic and Meaningful Participation in Heritage or Related Activities* (AMPHORA), in which participants are contributing fully to projects which, in turn, are able to provide the right support and safeguarding.

It began with an initial 2019 grant from the UKRI-funded MARCH Network to hold a 'sandpit' event in February 2020 on the subject of archaeology and heritage-based interventions to support mental health. The discussion brought together a range of stakeholders including service providers, heritage professionals,

*Veteran studentship holders from the University of Winchester excavating a Hessian Mercenary dugout in a collaboration between Pre-Construct Archaeology and Operation Nightingale at Barton Farm, Winchester, 2018. Credit: Harvey Mills ARPS*



mental health professionals, representatives from local government, social prescribers and, crucially, beneficiaries as experts through lived experience. Among the results of that day-long workshop was the expression of support for a set of best-practice guidelines to ensure that potential beneficiaries of new initiatives would be fully supported – and the best possible outcome achieved for them – and that the expertise of those working in the historic environment and those working in mental health would be embedded in the project.

Building on this, a much larger grant from the UKRI MARCH Network supported a nine-month Delphi consultation in 2021, with a significantly expanded stakeholder panel, through which a consensus view of the key elements was achieved over three rounds of questionnaires and feedback. The AMPHORA guidelines produced through the consultation are intended to

- help service providers better understand and address their responsibilities
- help social prescribers/link workers to gauge the quality of support that should be offered to individuals they might be considering referring to heritage-based therapeutic services
- give potential participants a better understanding of what they might expect in terms of support.

The intention is that by following the guidance in AMPHORA, projects can demonstrate that they are following best-practice guidelines and that the logo can be used as a form of quality assurance. In this way potential participants, social prescribers and funding bodies can also be reassured that projects are fully able to provide the best possible outcomes for both the participants and the historic environment.



Staff, students and volunteers of the Anglo-Georgian Expedition working at Nokalakevi, which has also hosted UK, Georgian and Ukrainian veterans since 2017. Credit: Paul Everill

## References

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## Paul Everill

Dr Paul Everill is Reader in Archaeology at the University of Winchester. As well as conducting research on developer-led archaeology and the impact on those employed in that sector (the *Invisible diggers* project), he has been co-director of the Anglo-Georgian Expedition to Nokalakevi since 2002. Paul started working in the area of archaeology and wellbeing in 2015, establishing the archaeological fee-waiver studentships for veterans at Winchester in 2016, and hosting UK, Georgian and Ukrainian veterans on a wellbeing programme, as part of excavations at Nokalakevi, from 2017.



## Karen Burnell

Dr Karen Burnell is Associate Professor of Applied Psychology at Solent University, Southampton and a chartered psychologist by research. Karen specialises in applied psychology, with a particular focus on veteran studies, psychogerontology, mental health and wellbeing, and research methodologies. Over the years, Karen has explored the role of social support in mental health and wellbeing and, more specifically, peer support. At the heart of all of Karen's research is the exploration of informal support networks and psychosocial interventions.

