

# Parallel skills

a look at new skills being added to the core skillset of the field archaeologist

Guy Hunt MCifA (5654), Partner Archaeologist, L – P : Archaeology

**HS2 fieldwork projects have placed archaeologists and archaeological contracting companies at the sharp end of delivering large-scale, highly complex projects to the very highest standards for health and safety, environmental protection and quality. In many cases, the projects require the archaeological contractor to take on the major responsibilities of mobilising large sites in remote locations, constructing and installing welfare compounds, managing the site security requirements, and taking on the safety and logistical responsibility for working with large quantities of plant to the rigorous standards of the HS2 project.**

Our response at L – P has been to embark on a programme of training and skills development to empower our archaeologists to take on this expanded role. These are skills that we could consider as parallel skills to the core archaeological skillset needed to execute fieldwork in the 21st century. However, the ability to conform to wider industry standards and legal responsibilities mean that in a way these are simply an extension of the core skillset for the modern-day archaeological fieldworker.



*Lifting supervisors to overseeing lifting on site. Credit: L – P Archaeology; © HS2 Ltd*

An alternative strategy to upskilling the archaeologists themselves is of course to work in conjunction with (or to employ) a third-party civil engineering contractor to take on the 'difficult bits' of the project, more accurately, the non-archaeological elements of the project. However, L – P have taken the view that if we were going to be taking on the considerable contractual risks involved in managing these elements of the project, that it would be best for us to build as much knowledge and skills within the organisation as possible.

To give an example, the use of lifting equipment within our sites means the design of lift plans, the provision of lifting

supervisors to oversee the lifting in the field, the presence of slingers to sling loads and signallers to safely oversee the movement of plant and delivery lorries. Whilst the design of the lift plans was subcontracted to a specialist, all other roles were filled by giving appropriate training to team members. All such roles within the HS2 system require fully certificated training (assessed by CPCS). By enabling our archaeological team to execute lifts when needed, we were able to make use of enhanced flexibility for our operations, without needing to spend precious resources contracting in third-party team members.

This approach to skills underpins our philosophy throughout, which is to provide our teams with the tools they need to fully execute a job, to retain this resource within our teams and to feed a virtuous circle where we are able to use this flexibility to retain archaeologists within the team in a more stable way.

Our philosophy of ongoing investment and upskilling of our archaeological team (arguably sometimes outside the core required skills of our profession), means we are in turn improving and enhancing their future employment situation. Clearly, we hope they will remain with L – P for the long haul, but if their employment situation changes, we can be confident that they have left us with more skills, experience and vital site knowledge that will stand them in good stead for any future career move.

By fully managing all aspects of our own sites, we have also been upskilling and investing in our management team. This allows us to not only retain control of our sites close to the core management team, but also enhance the management capability and capacity of our entire archaeological team. Running what is essentially an entire construction site brings new challenges and requires an appropriate allocation of people to cover the roles. One interesting corollary of this type of training is that it has helped us to see our other projects from a new perspective; we are better able to understand the parameters within which other non-HS2 clients see their sites and this means we are far better placed and resourced to respond to their needs.

The HS2 projects have acted as a catalyst for a process that was already occurring, albeit more slowly, of enhancing our ability to work with construction industry partners within their parameters. Most importantly, this kind of accelerated change requires the kind of radical investment in skills that is only made possible through a project like HS2.



*L – P:  
Archaeology  
staff working as  
bankers to  
safely oversee  
the movement of  
plant and  
delivery lorries.  
Credit: L – P  
Archaeology;  
© HS2 Ltd*

*Running what is essentially an entire construction site brings new challenges and requires an appropriate allocation of people to cover the roles.*



*Organising the security detail on site. Credit: L – P Archaeology; © HS2 Ltd*

## Guy Hunt

Guy is a founding partner of L – P : Archaeology. Since its formation in 1999, he has worked on excavations in London and further afield. Guy has a BA in Archaeology from The Institute of Archaeology (UCL) and is a Member of the Chartered Institute of Archaeologists (MCIFA). He heads up archaeological projects both on and off site. As an on-site project manager, he enjoys the opportunity to spend time on site during the excavation phase before continuing the post-excavation work from the London office in Brick Lane.

