



**Festival of  
Archaeology**

**A DBA of  
your  
garden**

**Student Takeover Day**

# What is a DBA?

Before I started studying archaeology, my biggest question was: how do archaeologists know where to start? Surely it can't just be luck?

There's actually a whole process before excavation even begins, known as the Desk-Based Assessment, or DBA. This is when archaeologists collect as much information as they can about the area they want to study, including geology, history, old maps and previous investigations that have happened nearby.

**The DBA is a very important step in the archaeological project as it allows us to plan very precisely - we wouldn't want to dig where somebody has already been if they've taken everything!**

# Have a go yourself!

The best part about a DBA is that it can be done from home...by anyone! Read on to see how you could discover the history in your own area.

It's important to remember that even though you are able to explore your local area, it is not a good idea to actually excavate without permission or professional guidance.

Is there a part of your local area that you've always been curious about? How much do you know about the history of your town? What could be hiding under the surface of your garden?

One of the most exciting parts of archaeology is that it could be anywhere - archaeologists may decide to dig for a number of reasons, including; historical place names suggest activity, old maps that show lost buildings, strange lumps in the ground, or even where interesting finds have been discovered in the past!

# Three steps to start your research...

**Step 1: Historic Environment Records contain huge amounts of information about the history and archaeology of a certain area. Most councils run one, so they're a great place to begin exploring. Here is a link to a page that explains more about HERs and where to find your local one:** *Historic Environment Records (HERs) | Historic England*

**Step 2: Historical Maps can be a fascinating way to see how an area has developed over time.** *Old-Maps - the online repository of historic maps* **and** *Designations Map Search (arcgis.com)* **are both great tools where you filter which monuments you can see or flick between maps from different dates.**

**Step 3: The British Geological Survey have an interactive map of Britain if you're curious:** *Geology of Britain viewer - British Geological Survey (bgs.ac.uk)*

# And finally...

I hope you have enjoyed trying to do a DBA of your own area. Perhaps you found something exciting, or learned something new!

I've only put a few resources on here that you may find useful when you begin researching, but there are plenty more! Why not see what other websites you can find, or perhaps even visit a local archives library in person if they're open?

Desk-Based Assessments are a key element of any archaeological excavation, and now you've done one yourself!

If you really enjoyed the process, perhaps you could see if there is a local history or archaeology group you could join to share what you've found, and to do more research in the future. Maybe you'll even get the chance to get involved with an excavation...