

10 things graphics staff wished Diggers knew

1. The graphics team often don't see the site you were excavating

When you are completing your hand drawings or your survey, remember that the graphics team probably didn't see the site. Things on-site may seem obvious, such as "we didn't excavate that bit because there was a service pipe in the way", but when it gets to the office your graphics team are left with only half a feature! Drawing the unexcavated segment of your feature makes our lives much easier in trying to place your intervention. Also don't be afraid to say hello if you're in the office, talking to each other can really help clear things up.

2. We are not mind-readers

You're drawing loads of stuff into your section drawing. You use an abundance of symbols and know what they all are. You may think to yourself "hey, I keyed it on my other drawing, it'll be fine". It comes to report stage and only some drawings have been forwarded to the illustrator, meaning your key is nowhere to be found. Perhaps even the Project Officer has no idea what you were getting at, since these conventions weren't agreed on as a team, and the process grinds to a halt as we try to decipher! Please label every individual drawing when things aren't 100% obvious, and try to stick to conventions as a team; it saves us all a lot of time in the long run.

3. It's not just the press of a button

While most graphics are completed digitally nowadays, many tasks can't (yet) be automated because so much of archaeology is interpretation. We can't scan a pencil line drawing in and tell the computer to just work it out for us. While it may be invisible, a lot of work goes in. Of course, we couldn't do it without your recording in the first place!

4. Legible handwriting is a godsend

Illustrators are not the only people who benefit from this, and we know it's tough when it's cold and you have gloves on and it's tipping it down. But please! And those quick little annotations you made in lowercase? Sometimes they're very tricky, especially for non-native speakers/readers. Take your time and you'll save us time.

5. We do really appreciate it when you sharpen your pencil before drawing

It may sound daft, but it's true. For example, when you draw over your cut lines to make them more obvious by making them darker, and not thicker, we really appreciate it, and sharp pencil is crucial.



6. North might not be where you think it is

As an illustrator, I find that many photos and drawings that come through the office are apparently pointing in a direction that they clearly aren't when I get the whole site survey up on screen. Maybe when you started, your Supervisor pointed at a tree and said "North is there". Unfortunately they may have told someone else something slightly different, and "there" can change an awful lot depending on how close that tree is. Sometimes people put compasses in the camera bags on-site; it really can't hurt. Keep these directions consistent on your drawings and on your registers too.

7. Two GPS points aren't quite enough

If you are hand-planning, don't just make sure that your GPS points are accurate; please put in more than two as well. Three will help, but four will really make sure we know where your feature is. If you put in only two, but one of them is a bit off, the orientation of your drawing can go all over the place, especially if (see point 6) your site records have a shaky understanding of where North is.

8. We might ultimately make your drawing much more boring – but your work is not a waste of time

Maybe you spent a long time on that section drawing, including every little stone, every charcoal inclusion, all those sherds drawn just like they were in real life. It looks lovely. Then maybe you see the report, and you're excited to see your contribution. But instead, it's just a few crisp digital lines with some numbers on it, and not pretty at all! But it's okay. When we are preparing illustrations, we want to show only what is necessary to show. Sometimes interpretations change/become refined post-excavation, and all we need to see in the report is that this feature cuts that feature. Don't be disheartened, though. You did your part, and your drawing lives on in the archive, along with all the information that would have been lost forever otherwise. This is better than not having enough information.

9. If something doesn't make sense, say so

Sometimes survey files have squiggles everywhere as someone was trying to magic some sense into what they saw on the ground. But mistakes can get magnified once another pair of eyes have tried to interpret your interpretation. Keep your Supervisor/PO in the loop because if it's wrong, it doesn't help anyone.

10. We love photos of people doing archaeology stuff on site

Love them. Be the poster child for your unit! Wield a mattock safely and sensibly while wearing full PPE and get someone to take a photo! We can use these in our training and promo material, and the better quality the photo, the better for us.

