

back to this modern terrain of grief and may provide solace by learning how past generations of humanity dealt with death.

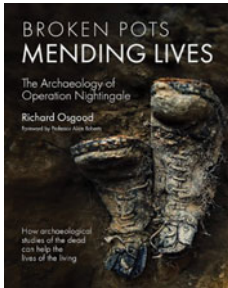
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RICHARD OSGOOD. 2023. *Broken pots, mending lives: the archaeology of Operation Nightingale*. Oxford: Oxbow Books; 978-1-78925-938-4 hardback £25.



Since its inception in 2011, Operation Nightingale has captivated archaeologists as well as the public by suggesting that fieldwork and other forms of engagement with heritage could offer immediate benefits to the mental health of disabled military veterans. The veterans of Operation Nightingale have frequently been featured in both scholarly and popular journals, magazines and media, but *Broken pots, mending lives: the archaeology of Operation Nightingale* represents the first published text focused solely on this programme. In addition to co-founding Operation Nightingale, author Richard

Osgood has been one of the most visible and most vocal advocates for the use of heritage work in benefitting veterans' mental health.

Broken pots has eight chapters featuring the programme's particularly long-running and/or significant projects, although this does not account for all Operation Nightingale projects and others are alluded to in passing. Each chapter is provided with a select bibliography relevant to that site. The ninth chapter is devoted to summarising the wellbeing results that Operation Nightingale has achieved with its veteran population, again supported by a bibliography. Operation Nightingale's trademark focus on the individuals carrying out fieldwork, as well as the archaeology itself, is readily apparent throughout the book. The author's conversational writing style and habit of relating memorable onsite moments pairs with outstanding photography to convey the warmth and sense of community present on Operation Nightingale digs. The opening acknowledgements highlight the vast network of supportive partners, veterans, and archaeologists who have collaborated to make Operation Nightingale a success.

The true complexity of helping veterans is displayed throughout this volume. The author's familiarity with, and obvious regard for, this population has resulted in a book that is as informative about the nuanced British veteran population as the archaeology itself. Anecdotal

evidence and a substantial body of peer-reviewed research indicate that Operation Nightingale brings in veterans with an enormous range of needs and an equally wide range of goals, and that the majority of them walk away from projects feeling better in some way. The inclusion of veterans' voices in the book increases its emotional impact but also eloquently communicates the loneliness, displacement, loss of self and loss of purpose that veterans frequently struggle with when they exit the service. Yes, the book features veterans who manage combat-related trauma and injuries but equally well-represented are those who never saw combat and yet face challenges with transitioning into civilian life regardless. *Broken pots* accurately conveys that much of what Operation Nightingale and others like it offer is an environment where veterans can carry out meaningful work alongside the only other people who understand their culture. Research in the USA and UK consistently shows that despite receiving widespread popular support veterans do face a stigma in professional environments due to misconceptions concerning a range of factors, foremost among them their mental and physical health. In short, most people in these two countries at least are sympathetic to veterans, but this does not necessarily result in jobs or career opportunities. The veterans who have taken part in Operation Nightingale should be commended for challenging these negative stereotypes by carrying out professional work to a professional standard.

The work Operation Nightingale engages in is inherently interdisciplinary and this book would have benefitted from input from other subject-matter experts. Experiences of the veterans and medical practitioners on projects has led to consistent calls for greater integration of mental health expertise (e.g. Everill *et al.* 2020). The reality is that there are aspects of the fieldwork environment that may be detrimental to the mental health of participants, veteran and civilian alike (Eifling 2021). These factors must be mitigated and managed, which does become more complex as programmes expand their operations, as Operation Nightingale has, to include multiple project managers and long-term engagement with participants. The need for dedicated mental health clinicians on Operation Nightingale projects was identified by Professor Alan Finnegan, a doctor and psychotherapist with substantial experience working with the military and veteran populations, as was the need for a dedicated screening system aimed at ensuring veterans were matched to projects within their capabilities (Finnegan 2016). The physical impact of fieldwork represents a significant gap in current research but it is certainly a factor when veterans take part in projects. It is clear that the author has amassed invaluable experience concerning the optimal manner in which to run excavations that benefit British veterans and many of these insights are on display throughout this volume. However, more details concerning the manner in which Operation Nightingale integrates certified healthcare professionals on a programmatic level would have given the book greater authority in what is very much a developing field.

Broken pots, mending lives successfully conveys the impressive results of Operation Nightingale in an attractive package. The author also makes a strong case for greater institutional support for the programme, presenting it as low-cost, high-public-impact fieldwork that benefits disabled veterans. While there was a missed opportunity here to show how far the support elements have progressed since Operation Nightingale began, there is no doubt that this handsome volume with its accessible price point will help to

popularise the association of heritage activities and wellbeing among both a popular and a professional audience.

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