

# A DAY OF ARCHAEOLOGY FOR A FREELANCE ZOOARCHAEOLOGIST

August 5, 2011 swarman Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011, Environmental Archaeology, Romano-British Anthropology, Archaeology, Et-Tell, Excavation, France, Museology, PDF, project manager, Sylvia Warman Cirencester, Tewkesbury, Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeological Service, word processing program

Sylvia Warman Cirencester UK

8.30 am

My day starts with checking emails. I am signed up to the ZOOARCH email list, a superb resource which enables animal bone specialists to ask each other questions, hunt down missing references and even identify mystery bones. The first email is from a PhD student in France who has read a paper I wrote back in 2004, requesting a copy of my thesis. This involves burning the files to a CD, as it is too large to email. The second is a request for a paper I had contributed to in 2007 on an assemblage from Tewkesbury (Gloucestershire) which had included the skull of a lamb from a four horned breed (like the Hebridean breed of sheep still seen today). Unfortunately I did not have this paper as a PDF (the preferred format for emailing) so I photocopied my hard copy using my handy printer/scanner/photocopier.

The next is from the local history and archaeology society, the council is changing the parking charges for evening and weekends and there is concern that this will impact those who attend the lectures that this group organises.

I receive several emails that include adverts for archaeological jobs. I forward these to some friends who are currently without work. The recession hit commercial archaeology hard and many archaeologists are currently out of work. Now government cuts mean that those working in the public sector also face the possibility of redundancy.

I receive some comments back on a draft report I have written for WHEAS (Worcestershire Historic Environment and Archaeological Service). The report is on an assemblage of animal bones from a Romano-British site in Worcestershire. Much of the county has acid soils which are not good for preserving bones as they are alkaline. So when a site in the small pocket of calcareous clay comes up I often have the pleasure of studying the bones. This project is a publication, but much of my time is spent on assessments. The latter are short summaries of the potential of an assemblage which are then used to help decide what further study is worthwhile.

11am

The snail mail arrives – a parcel from WHEAS with some additional animal bones from the evaluation carried out at the same site (as the excavation assemblage I have already studied). I take the parcel to my lab in the conservatory at the bottom of my garden. I quickly scan these in case there is anything to add to the report, they are very similar

to the bones I have already looked at from the excavation, mostly cattle and horse leg bones, all very well preserved and stained dark brown from the deposit in which they were buried.



*additional animal bones from the evaluation*

1pm

I head into town (about ten minutes' walk from my house) to post the CD and photocopies. I have lunch in town and then head home.

2pm

I read through the edits and reply with a date by which I will have them completed. Commercial archaeology projects are often run to very tight timetables so keeping the client updated is important. A project such as this one could have up to ten different specialists contributing to it both within the organisation and freelance like myself. The project manager ensures this all runs smoothly and that everyone has the latest information. This project has been partly funded by English Heritage as far more was uncovered during the excavation than had been predicted.

I start working on the edits which are very clear thanks to the track changes tool that the word processing program has. This makes it much easier to work on documents that are emailed back and forth. I complete the text edits but the reformatting of the figure proves more complicated and will have to wait until next week.

5.30pm My Day of Archaeology ends