

# END OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR AT YORK

June 29, 2012 Sara Perry Day of Archaeology 2012, Education Anatolia, archaeologist, Archaeology, Archaeology Department, Çatalhöyük, Copper Age, King's College, King's College London, Lecturer, Neolithic, southampton, teacher, York

Today seems a very opportune moment to blog about [my life as an archaeologist](#), as it's the final day of the academic year at [York](#), and everyone is revelling over the coming of summer. I have something more to celebrate as well, as I've finally had time to sign the contract that turns my currently fixed-term position at York into an 'open' (permanent) [lectureship](#). Yay!

I have looked back at [my contribution to the 2011 Day of Archaeology](#), and this has led me to reflect on the incredible changes that have presented themselves in my life since then. Exactly a year and one day ago I graduated with my PhD in Archaeology from Southampton, and then left for fieldwork at [Çatalhöyük](#). I started my post at York in January, and at the same time as launching into the design and teaching of a series of new classes and modules, I closed off some research projects (e.g., our [Wellcome Collection Brains exhibition](#) – see photo below!) whilst embarking on others (e.g., the [Urban Cultural Heritage and Creative Practice](#) collaborative).

Amidst all this activity, though, there has been one clear constant, and that is the relentless pace of scholarly life. At any given time an academic is torn between a seemingly infinite number of obligations, and it would be difficult to accurately characterise the amount of multi-tasking—and the ever-increasing number of emails and responsibilities—that come with the job. It's such diversity and challenge that makes this lifestyle energising and inspiring for me—but it is also indescribably demanding, and there is a consistent concern in the back of my mind that I may have missed or skipped over something critical to my work in all the frenzy. Today alone I had 3 student meetings and a departmental meeting to attend; I am negotiating the start-up of two new projects, and am analysing data from [an ongoing project at King's College London](#); I am preparing documentation for our fourth season at [Çatalhöyük](#) this summer; I am arranging a qualitative methods workshop to run in a couple of weeks, as well as helping to facilitate some filming at the [Archaeology Department here in York](#) around the same time; I have a book chapter

that demands completion, along with an unspeakable number of emails in my inbox that require attention. Even as I write this list, I can think of at least a half-dozen other tasks that need consideration.



*Me, June 2012, basking in the glow of my little acknowledgement at the Wellcome Collection exhibition, Brains: The Mind as Matter*

But whilst the scale of the workload could be paralysing—or, at a minimum, disillusioning—I have moments every day where I think how fortunate I am to be doing what I’m doing. Most often, these moments present themselves in my interactions with students and in teaching, something which I never would have expected given that so many people seem to disparage the experience of being a teacher. For me, however, the enthusiasm of the students at York, the chance to watch them develop and experiment with their ideas, and the opportunity to see them present their work and gain confidence in themselves and in their intellectual capacities, make my job extraordinary. The relentless nature of academia could easily consume you, I think, but it’s in those conceptual and material engagements with others that the frenzy slips away and you’re left with a sense of real inspiration. Indeed, for me, it’s not just inspiration, but hopefulness and excitement about what’s to come tomorrow.