

IT'S VIVA DAY

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Hello folks. This morning I have my PhD viva, so today is quite a significant day of archaeology for me.

A PhD is a postgraduate research degree that usually takes around three or four years to complete. In my case it has taken seven! (Mostly due to the fact that I have been working throughout that time.) The aim of a PhD is to produce a thesis of around 100,000 words in length that demonstrates the candidate's ability to undertake independent critical research and makes an original contribution to knowledge in the field. The viva is the means by which PhD candidates and their work are examined. Today it's my turn to go through this process. I have taken the morning off work (I am a researcher at the Arts Council) to come to the UCL Institute of Archaeology where I undertook my research.

I have been involved in archaeology since the mid 1990s and I came to London to do an undergraduate degree in archaeology in 1999. I haven't stopped since! Over the years my research has moved from digging holes and examining artefacts to looking at the way in which archaeology connects with people's everyday lives. My PhD research looked at government policy. Essentially, my thesis attempts to answer the question "why do we have laws that preserve some material remains of the past and not others?".

The viva is at 10am and should last around an hour. There will be four people in the room: two examiners, my PhD supervisor and myself. I will have to defend the method, theory and findings in my research. The best kind of viva is a stimulating and challenging discussion between three researchers (the supervisor has to keep quiet!); the worst is an aggressive demolition of a new researcher by two senior academics with egos and reputations to protect. I expect that most vivas tend to resemble the former rather than the latter.

I will post again at lunchtime to let you know how I get on. Fingers crossed!