

PREHISTORY BY PHONE AND E-MAIL

July 29, 2011 Susan Greaney Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011, Prehistory archaeologist, Archaeology, BBC, But Kilmartin House Museum, curator, Fort Cumberland, freelance researcher, Halangy Porth beach, historian, interpretation officer and curator, museum curator, Paul Ashbee, Salisbury and South Wiltshire Museum, Salisbury Museum, scientist, Scotland, Senior Properties Historian, Stonehenge, United Kingdom, York

Hello! I'm Sue Greaney, and I work for [English Heritage](#) as a Senior Properties Historian. A historian, I hear you gasp? I thought this was a place for archaeologists? Fear not, I am an archaeologist – my job title isn't particularly accurate as its archaeology and prehistory that are my specialist subjects!

Today is an office day in Swindon. Not huge amounts of digging in my life, unfortunately, unless you count digging in archives, libraries and my own computer filing system. My day also doesn't have any meetings or scheduled site visits in it, so that is a bonus – I'll be catching up on quite a few different pieces of work, so you'll get an idea of the wide range of things I do.



Me at my desk.

The major project that I'm currently working on is the [new visitor centre](#) that we are planning for Stonehenge. I'm the archaeologist advising on the content of the new exhibition and the new interpretation for our thousands of visitors. It's a really important project and most days I have to pinch myself that I get to work on it. I work closely with a small project team dedicated to the interpretation, learning and outreach elements of the project.

First thing I uploaded photographs from a field visit to Kilmartin Glen in Argyll, Scotland last week and put them on our SharePoint site. Not a usual port of call as by its very nature working for English Heritage usually involves England! But [Kilmartin House Museum](#) is renowned as a prehistoric museum, and the landscape has been fully interpreted and designed for visitors to explore. It even has two podcasts. We went to see the new European funded interpretation scheme in the area, to meet the museum curator. It's not a dissimilar approach to the one we'll be taking at Stonehenge— we want to equip people in our visitor centre to understand Stonehenge, but also the various monuments and features they'll see in the landscape, and also encourage them to get out and explore the rest of the World Heritage Site.



Some of the new interpretation at Kilmartin Glen

A series of phone calls followed. Talked to an interpretation colleague about the reconstructed Neolithic houses that we're planning for the external gallery at the visitor centre, arrangements

for a site visit to Stonehenge next week and our temporary exhibition programme. Talked to a scientist colleague of mine down at Fort Cumberland about some externally commissioned research. Talked to a visitor operations colleague at Stonehenge about the Neolithic houses. You wouldn't believe what a busy summer they're having! Couple of e-mails sent to Stonehenge team members and archives staff at our National Monuments Record.

Tea break. Right, onto some proper work. The rest of the morning was spent doing some research that will support the contents of our display cases in the visitor centre exhibition. This involved writing up a paper for discussion at a meeting next week, using our own internal (and rather wonderful) webGIS, the [Pastscape](#) website (we have our own internal databases behind this, but Pastscape works so well I use it a lot) and the fantastic Wiltshire Heritage Museum [collections database](#). I can't tell you much about what's actually going into the cases, as it wouldn't be a surprise when you all come and see the new visitor centre when it opens in 2013! Suffice to say that I spent the rest of the morning and a few hours after lunch looking at lovely prehistoric objects and reading antiquarian and 20th century archaeology accounts of their discoveries. After sending off this and another paper to the Stonehenge interpretation officer and curator, I sent confirmation to a freelance researcher that we were taking him on for a small piece of synthesis/writing work.

Ok, time to clear some of my e-mail inbox. I've been so busy this week that several things have been neglected for quite a few days. First, I arranged a meeting date with colleagues in September to review the next stages of the Stonehenge scanning project. Next, I responded to a query from the curator at Salisbury Museum about where the late Paul Ashbee's archive is residing. I downloaded some mapping tiles that I need to create a map which will go on an interpretation panel at Kingston Russell Stone Circle, one of our small free properties down in Dorset. When I'm not thinking about Stonehenge I usually pick up a few interpretation projects at our free properties.



Kingston Russell stone circle, Dorset

And then the most important e-mail of the day – anyone up for the pub? Well, it is a Friday! Cue random exchange of e-mails from my friends at work.

Next I respond to request from BBC Learning for an EH expert on Vikings. Not sure if we have one of those! And reply with photographs to a colleague of mine in York who is working on the EH Coastal Risk Assessment and wanted some information about cliff erosion near one of our guardianship properties at Halangy Down on the Isles of Scilly. This is somewhere I did some research and interpretation a couple of years ago.



Me at Halangy Porth beach, Isles of Scilly, a few years ago

Well, there ends the Day of Archaeology. Now to add the blog post! Let's do this again next year.