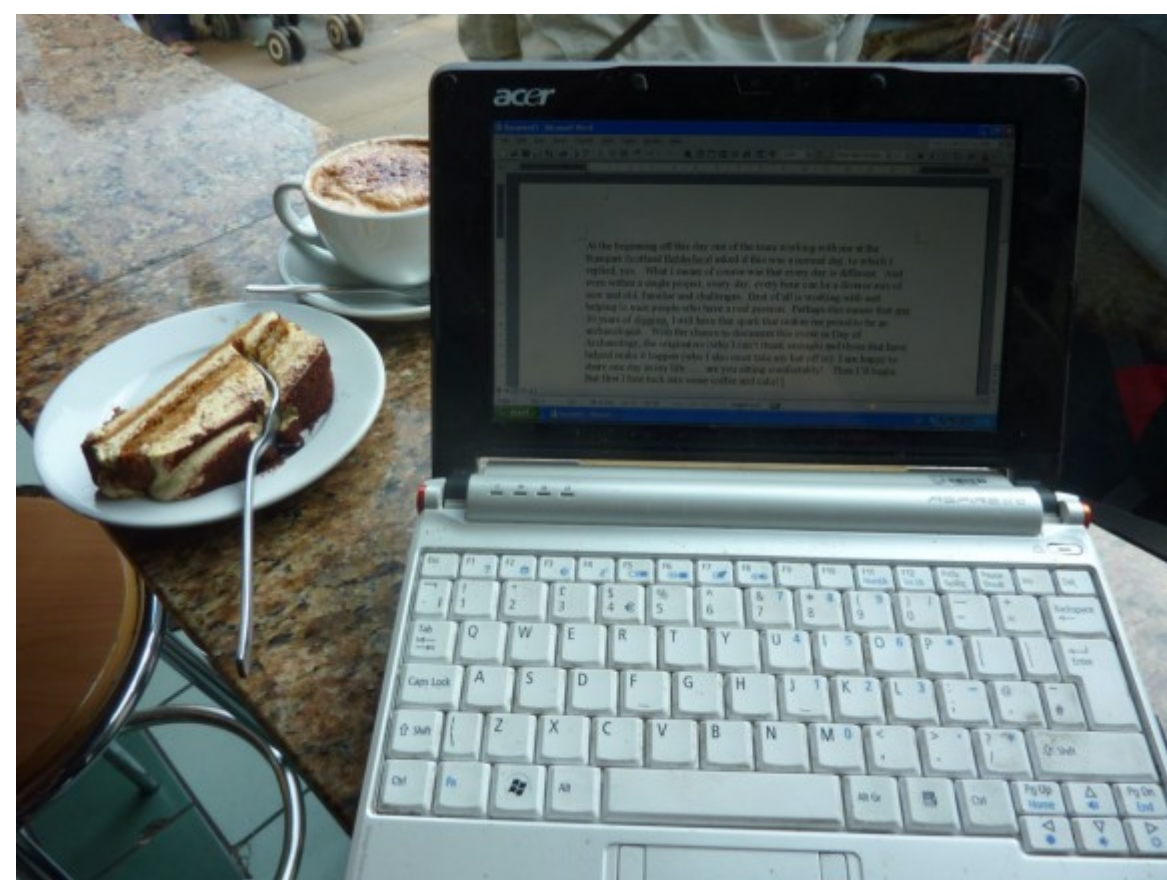


TRAINING SCHOOL – WELL THAT WAS THE DAY THAT WAS!

July 30, 2011 Badger Community Archaeology, Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011 Anthropology, archaeologist, Archaeology, car turns, cement mixer, Edinburgh University, head off, Human development, Lammermuir hills, Murray Cook, National Museum of Scotland, Rampart Scotland, Scotland, The Blue Aeroplanes, Training School

At the beginning of this day one of the team working with me at the Rampart Scotland fieldschool asked if this was a normal day, to which I replied, yes. What I meant of course was that every day is different. And even within a single project, every day, every hour can be a diverse mix of new and old, familiar and challenges. Best of all is working with and helping to train people who have a real passion. Perhaps this means that after 30 years of digging, I still have that spark that makes me proud to be an archaeologist. With the chance to document this event in Day of Archaeology, the originators (who I can't thank enough) and those that have helped make it happen (who I also must take my hat off to) I am happy to share one day in my life ... are you sitting comfortably! Then I'll begin. But first I best tuck into some coffee and cake!



The morning started with a shock, as I forgot that we started at 8am, so it was quickly feed the hens, feed the cats, make breakfast for my wife (who has discovered the joys of a bad back – courtesy of our last excavation!) who also runs Past Horizons. No time to feed myself, as I jumped into the minibus and drove through the side roads of East Lothian in Scotland to our project – White Castle hillfort on the edge of the Lammermuir hills. We troop out the van

and stroll to each trench, discussing what we will do today, and why. The process is as important as the digging. One trench is to be planned, another cleaned for photography, yet another must investigate and sample a layer with charcoal. And of course the ditch needs cleaned and recorded and topographic survey must continue. Everyone splits off to their tasks and trenches, smiles tell me that Murray Cook and I are doing something right.

To us there is not such thing as a bad question or a stupid one – they all mean we are discussing and always have time to explore a concept, whether it is long distance trade of bronze and raw materials to the names and locations of supposed Iron Age tribes in Scotland around the 1st century AD. Then why not use the spectacular view across the Lothian plain before us to talk about 18th century agricultural improvements and farming techniques. It all matters.



Suddenly trench 13 runs across with exciting news – what could it be? Well it turns out it was a fragment of cremated bone coming out of the charcoal. Only 4mm long and they spotted it, how about that for keen eyes. They soon find more, and we discuss what it could mean and a variety of ‘right’ answers. Talking seems to be half the fun of archaeology in this environment.

That is a steep rampart!

Soon, another car turns up, with three students (or ex students) from Edinburgh University, they are set to work on a new trench in the deep bracken (an invasive



and damaging fern like plant) . They want to learn to draw and dig, survey and section, plan and record – they will be the new archaeologists – so for them, the training is more detailed, more structured.

The council archaeologists turn up for a visit as I try again to connect to the internet and post another message from the hill – to no avail – but Murray and I then spend an hour with them, touring each trench, discussing future strategies and even mutual support in coming years. They have

Trench to nowhere. The ancient road must be here!

useful comments to make – and sometimes it pays to listen rather than talk (or perhaps I am just growing up).

Tea break comes and goes, and the hut platform becomes a platform, with no trace of a hut (yet) but plenty of sign of root damage to sub surface archaeology. It looks like it has been put through a cement mixer and then poured back onto the site. Useful to know for monument management plans. We start to discuss the next year already, and the next, while talking of other projects to come, and projects we have remembered fondly.

All too soon, it is 1pm, and time to head off to Edinburgh, however, I decide to go home, with a twist. We wind and drive deeper into the hills and point to castles and cairns, standing stones and sheepfolds, that each tell a millennia old story of people and place. Back at base, we clean and prepare for the big city, which gives me just enough time to check BAJR jobs, answer some emails and even help out a poor woman, who needed a trowel in Cornwall ASAP! – no worries. Then I collate the Open day rota for Saturday (only 15 people at a time, bussed up from the nearest village) phone up and email confirmations just in time for the team to arrive at my house and it is off to Edinburgh.



Trench 17 - the dinky ditch!

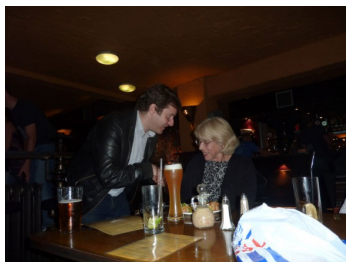


Team on the National Museum of Scotland steps

The newly renovated museum is stunning and I let them off the lead in a stunning, sunny Edinburgh. Time to meet at 6pm, when I will take them on a mini archaeo-tour and then to some of my favourite watering holes. Bannermans, Whistlebinkies and the Pear tree. Although I am only on the orange juice it does not matter, and I get to listen to their stories and lives,

their reasons for coming and what they hope to get out of it, from real knowledge to pure simple fun. And why not, archaeology should be fun, archaeology can produce amazing new evidence and still remain fun.

I tell them about another couple of local projects and a TV link up to a live event with the amazing Archaeology Scotland that is happening over the next month as well as some other education events. The best thing about them is that I can't wait to learn, and from the team (who are so mixed in what they do in real life) I absorb hints, suggestions and ideas.



Well hello.. so you are archaeologists

Edinburgh trip allows us to bond more to learn about each other, which in a way is just as important as any iron age ditch. WE even find that the locals can be overly friendly.

Heading back to base, I head off with the boys, and we discuss everything ranging from poor superman jokes to Pictish identity and broch building, then turn again to what could make the fieldschool better. The conversation is easy and enjoyable.

As I finish off this piece, I am back home, its late, I am tired but I am happy.! Now... I wonder what will happen tomorrow.... oh yes... there is an open day.