



# FROM DAY OF ARCHAEOLOGY'S BRISTOL OFFICE

July 30, 2011 Matt Law Community Archaeology, Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011, Environmental Archaeology, Excavation, Finds, Prehistory Anthropology, Archaeology, Archaeology's Bristol Office, Cardiff University, Gastropods, Google, Hawaii, Matt Law, Snail, Social Media, Terry Brock, the Green Man, the Green Man music festival, Twitter, United Kingdom, Wales



As I write this, it's 9.30 am on Saturday in the UK – which means it's 10.30 pm on Friday in Hawaii (yes we have contributors in Hawaii). For most of the world, Day of Archaeology is over (although we will continue to publish posts for the next week). I am amazed, really very pleased, by just how many people embraced the idea of Day of Archaeology. Right now we have just under 360 posts published, with the promise of more to

come. I'm told the #dayofarch hashtag was used over 900 times on Twitter during the day. I can't begin to thank everyone who has been involved enough, from my fellow volunteers – Jess, Dan, Lorna, Andy, Stu and Tom – to all our contributors, and those who shared word of the day on facebook, twitter, Google+, academia.edu and other social media. What I hope we've created together is the single best resource to answer the question "what do archaeologists do?" Already, thanks to Terry Brock and Leigh Graves Wolf, work is underway turning the project into a schools teaching resource.

My day, unsurprisingly, was mostly spent checking through posts as they came in, occasionally altering them to make sure links to other sites or embedded videos worked, adding categories or tags if appropriate and (not too often actually) catching typos. I have no idea how many posts I checked, but I was consistently busy from 8 am to 6 pm and still working at 10.30 pm. I did grab the time to recruit one final volunteer for an archaeology engagement stand I'm helping to run at the Green Man music festival in Wales next month, but otherwise my day was all Day of Archaeology (how meta).

Had I not been doing this, I would most likely have been on site in Somerset, where I'm currently part of a team of commercial archaeologists excavating the surface of a former island now thoroughly inland, and buried under two metres of marine clay. The site occasionally yields some very nice lithics, such as this:



I may have been doing some lab work. I'm a part-time PhD student at Cardiff University, investigating environmental change throughout the period of human occupation in the Outer Hebrides. Mostly, this means I identify and count snail shells from samples taken in different features and layers on archaeological sites. You might think of the reasonably large snails you see in your garden when you read that, but there are many more species of snail that are truly miniscule – as small as 1mm in their largest dimension. Often these snails have very specific tolerances for the environmental conditions they can live in, which is especially informative when you have a few different species with similar tolerances occurring together. You can learn quite a lot about the use of different areas of a site from the snails. Some snail species arrived on the islands later than others, and I'm going to be working to date these arrivals as closely as possible, with the hope that the presence of a particular species in a deposit can become a tool for relative dating, much like archaeologists use particular types of ceramic or lithic form (the picture above, for example, is a classic Neolithic leaf-shaped arrowhead).

The day after Day of Archaeology will be spent (in part at least) reading through posts I didn't get a chance to see yesterday. I've really enjoyed reading about other archaeologists' working days around the world. I don't think I've learned more about archaeology in a single day before. Day of Archaeology will return next year. Thank you all for making it such a positive experience

Matt Law