

A DESKBOUND ARCHAEOLOGIST AT WORK...

July 29, 2011 Joe Flatman Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011 Anthropology, archaeological site, Archaeological sub-disciplines, archaeologist, Archaeology, Community Archaeology, county archaeologist and a university lecturer, deskbound archaeologist, deskbound archaeologist at work..., editor, Facebook, London, public archaeology; communication; publication; writing; editing; archaeology; local government; university, Richard MacNeish, the Guardian, Twitter, UK, United States

I'm Joe Flatman and I have two jobs in archaeology – I'm both a county archaeologist and a university lecturer in archaeology, working part-time between both in theory, full-time in both in reality. So this 'Day of Archaeology' is a standard very long one for me – a solid 12+ hours a day split between both jobs is not unusual, sometimes it is hard to see where one ends and the other begins.

I began today at 0700 when I dealt with the first of my work emails over breakfast (with a speedy sift through Facebook, Twitter and the Guardian for good measure – all increasingly 'work' related). After commuting into one of my two offices (a 30 minute bus ride), I have then spent the rest of the morning so far (its now 1100) doing various admin to do with my two jobs – a mixture of emails replied to and sent relating to my local government job and some book editing relating to my university job. This editing will take place all day long until at 1800 I go off to an evening work meeting, grabbing a meal on route. With luck I'll finally get home about 2200 and have a beer while watching some dumb TV show with my wife to unwind. What I do is not exactly the kind of work I expected to be doing when I started out in archaeology and it doesn't fit the popular image of archaeology either – I'm working in an office in central London wearing smart clothes, not out on an archaeological site in some exotic location. But my work is interesting and challenging all the same, which is what I am after, and importantly I feel that i make a difference: my two jobs mean that I get to tell a lot of people about archaeology and also get to visit and help protect a lot of sites.

The majority of today will be spent quietly working on editing two different books, a side of archaeological work that many people are not aware of. These books are important for both of my jobs – they are about communicating archaeology and advising people how they can become more involved in archaeology themselves. Those two tasks are some of the most important things anyone in my position can do. If people don't have the opportunity to learn more about and become more involved in archaeology, then we as a discipline are failing.

The first book I am working on today is an edited volume entitled 'Archaeology in Society: It's Contemporary Relevance'. I am co-editing it with an old friend, another archaeologist based in the USA. The book has 21 chapters, 30 authors and over 300 pages – it is huge! The book is all about how archaeology plays a role in modern society – how archaeological data is used by people from all walks of life, how archaeologists work in different sectors of society and contribute to the economy, and how archaeology can help us make a better and fairer world. The book originated from a conference held back in 2007 – five years later the books is now very nearly done, we're just checking the final set of 'proofs', the last draft of the book before it gets sent off to be printed. This is our last chance to check that the spelling and grammar are correct, the pages properly laid out, and so on. It is an intimidating thing to do –

the next time we see this book it will be on the shelves of a bookshop for sale, so we have to get things absolutely right now.

The second book I am working on today is a much shorter introductory guide to archaeology. This book is 'only' 50,000 words long and I have been commissioned to write it by a publisher. I have spent the last 18 months slowly working on it off-and-on, and in two days from now I have agreed to submit a complete draft of the book to the publisher – a rough version of the whole book. The book is designed to be an introductory text for anyone interested in archaeology, explaining what archaeology is and how archaeological work is undertaken. It has been really fun explaining the entire practice of archaeology in interesting and accessible terms, choosing examples from around the world to illustrate my points. But it will also be a relief to send the book off to the publisher! That will only be the start of a whole new cycle though: the book will then have to be checked by an editor at the publisher for mistakes, 'peer reviewed' (read by another archaeologist who will judge its writing and data and make suggestions for improvements) and revised in the light of these peoples' comments. Then I'll have to arrange images for the book and also work with the publisher's art department on its layout and format. Then the book will be 'typeset' – its pages laid out; and then finally I'll be able to check these pages for errors before the book is finally printed and ready for sale. so my submission of a draft on Monday is merely the start of another 12 months at least of further work.