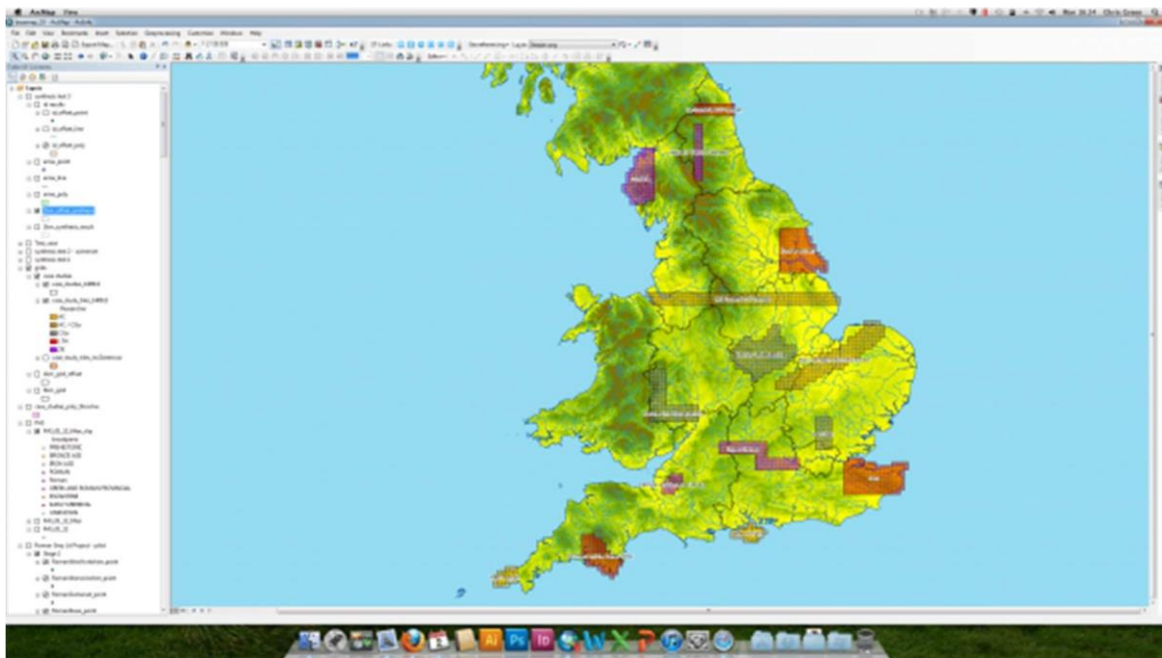


ACADEMIC RESEARCH: A DAY OF MEETINGS...

July 2, 2012 Chris Green Anglo-Saxon, Bronze Age, Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2012, Digital Archaeology, Early Medieval, Education, Iron Age, Roman, Romano-British GIS, School of Archaeology, University of Oxford

I work as a researcher at the School of Archaeology, University of Oxford. My job is to look after the GIS elements of a large (ERC funded), 5 year project to study the English landscape from 1500BC to AD 1086, which we call the [EngLalD project](#). For any who don't know, GIS stands for Geographic(al) Information Systems (or sometimes Science) and it is, essentially, computer software that lets you create maps and analyse data in its spatial context (to cut a long story short!). Our project is using GIS as one of the tools in its armoury in order to try to understand continuity and change in the English rural landscape over the period of 2,500 years from the Middle Bronze Age to Domesday. My job mostly involves bringing together a large number of pre-existing datasets within GIS software (specifically, ArcGIS) and trying to find patterns and trends over time.



ArcGIS. Spatial data: contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2012 (OS OpenData)

However, Friday was not a day that involved a lot of GIS work for me. Two of my colleagues on the EngLaId team work at the University's eResearch Centre (OeRC). During the morning, a few of us went over to the OeRC to meet with them and a Professor of Visualisation (Min Chen) and his team. We had a long and interesting discussion about innovative ways of visualising data. Prof Chen made a distinction between the two purposes of visualisation: to enable better academic understanding and exploration of data and to enhance public presentation of data. The former is where his team's research interests lie and they have done some fascinating work on creating 'glyphs' to display multiple data attributes at once. The previous time we met with him, Prof Chen had shown us a series of glyphs that described the behaviour of sperm, which was most memorable for the erratic travel paths of the sperm found in 'rats on drugs'! The meeting ended with me being invited to take part in a workshop on geospatial visualisation at the end of August.

I returned to my office for a couple of hours, ate some lunch, and set my computer to running some GIS tools. I then returned to the OeRC after lunch, leaving my processing processing, for our biweekly EngLaId team meeting. We normally meet here at the School of Archaeology, but the building is being partly rewired over the summer, so there is currently no space to hold meetings here. The team meeting lasted until after four o'clock, and seemed to be productive.

When we got back to the office, my colleague was told there was in a rat in her office (presumably disturbed by the builders), but I don't think this rat was on drugs... As it had been a long day, the pub beckoned, so we swiftly adjourned to there. I had to return to the office later to check on my GIS processing (and pick up my bike), which had completed by that time.

Friday wasn't really a typical day for me, as I am more usually found working at the computer in our attic office. But it was a fairly productive day over all, despite the relative lack of normal work. If anybody wants to know more about EngLaId, then please feel free to check out our own [blog](#).