

# A DAY AT WESSEX ARCHAEOLOGY

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Summarising the 29th June 2012 for the staff of [Wessex Archaeology](#) is a both a challenge and an opportunity. Spread over four regional offices in Edinburgh, Sheffield, Rochester and Salisbury everyone is busy working on a range of activities, from diving wrecks to excavation, examining finds in the lab to research. This blog aims to provide a glimpse of some of these activities.

## IN THE FIELD

We have a variety of staff out in the field today.



*A Wessex Archaeology diver © Crown Copyright, taken by Wessex Archaeology*

Our dive team are currently working for English Heritage on the [Contract for Archaeological Services in Relation to the Protection of Wrecks Act 1973](#). Today, falls within the fieldwork season, however they are not diving due to bad weather. You Can read their own Day of Archaeology blog – A Quiet Day.



*A very small Chris in the distance © Wessex Archaeology*

On dry land, well almost, Chris Ellis, Senior Archaeologist, is running investigations at Steart Point. In advance of a habitat creation scheme, Team van Oord, on behalf of the Environmental Agency working in partnership with the Wildfowl & Wetlands Trust, commissioned Wessex Archaeology to undertake the mitigation work on what is, and has always been, a low-lying peninsula prone to flooding. However over the past few month's fieldwork, including a walk over survey, geophysical survey, evaluation and excavation, our team have discovered evidence for settlement spanning several thousand years, including Iron Age, Romano-British, medieval and post-medieval occupation.



*Out on site © CEMEX UK Materials*

There are also various excavations going on across the country run by our different offices.



*Hannah Brown sporting the latest geophysics accessories © Wessex Archaeology*



Two of our terrestrial geophysics team, Ben Urmston and Hannah Brown, are also occupied out in the field undertaking a magnetometry survey. This is the kit the team use the most because it can detect a wide range of archaeological features.

## IN SCOTLAND



*OCHMAPP © Wessex Archaeology*

On Friday the [Outer Hebrides Coastal Communities Marine Archaeology Project](#) (OHCCMAP) team from Wessex Archaeology (Coastal & Marine) and the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) were in a very remote area of South Uist in the Outer Hebrides, accessed only by boat. The team have been studying previously unrecorded buildings and archaeological features, some of which are now underwater. Based upon reports from local people and communities the team have been mixing diving with landscape surveying and geoarchaeology to examine the development of these remote coastal landscapes during prehistory and in recent centuries. This year's results are already looking very interesting.

# IN THE SHEFFIELD OFFICE



*18th century system for the water features at Barnham Park © Wessex Archaeology*

In our Sheffield offices the team are finalising the report for fieldwork undertaken at the Grade 1 listed Barham Park, Wetherby, West Yorkshire. The excavations explored early 18th century water features that no longer exist in the contemporary gardens.

# IN THE SALISBURY OFFICE

Walking through the various labs and offices in the Salisbury offices, we collected a few photographs of people.



*Pulling together a site story © Wessex Archaeology*

In the Project Officer's room, things are quiet as nearly everyone is out in the field. However, Sue Clelland, Senior Archaeologist, is working on all the paper records from a large scale evaluation and excavation project. The written, photographic, drawing, environmental and site survey all need to be cross referenced. With this task now completed, Sue is trying to make sense of it all, grouping records together to develop a site story. On the computer, you can see the information for a late Roman building.



*Overlaying historical maps © Wessex Archaeology*

Chloe Hunnisett, Heritage Consultant, is back in the office after a trip to a site, walk over survey and visit to the local archives. It is now time to start on the desk based assessment for this site. Here, we can see uploaded digitised copies of historic maps overlaid onto the GIS over the HER data for local monuments. Chloe will now start her assessment of how the landscape has changed over time and what archaeology could exist in the area.





*Enhancing records © Wessex Archaeology*

Sophie Thorogood, Marine Archaeologist, is busy working on the final report for the [South East Rapid Coastal Zone Assessment](#). This is an English Heritage project, which aims to enhance the archaeological records of the National Monuments Record, local Historic Environment Records and Sites and Monuments Records, and to serve as a basis for improved management of the coastal historic environment.

## **MARINE GEOPHYSICS**

The marine geophysics team are busy interpreting sidescan data from the field. Sidescan is a type of geophysical survey that measures the intensity of soundwaves reflected off the seafloor. These experts can assess if the sidescan shows natural or man-made features. If man-made they could indicate the location of a wreck. Their work is very technical and complicated – illustrated by the complex combination of computer screens required.





*How many computer screens does one person need? Four, apparently © Wessex Archaeology*

Louise Tizzard, one of our Geologists, is looking at the geology of the seabed to understand submerged prehistoric landscapes in marine dredging zones. In particular looking at License Area 240, where in the past there has been a major discovery of Palaeolithic handaxes.

## **IN THE LAB**

In the lab you can find all our post-excavation specialists.



*Examining cremated remains © Wessex Archaeology*

Dr Jackie Mckinley, is our human remains expert. Today she is examining a cremation burial. Here, she is detailing all the identifying fragments of bone that can help her conclude about age, sex and other important information. For example, examining the cremation burial by spits can highlight how the skeleton was placed into the burial vessel.



*Back from the field and cleaning finds © Wessex Archaeology*

Tom, currently back from the field, is washing finds from an excavation.



*Post excavation finds sorting © Wessex Archaeology*



While Ellie Brooks is looking through these washed finds, sorting, counting and weighing them by type and content bag, then preparing to box them up.



*Chris in the environmental lab © Wessex Archaeology*



*Delicate work © Wessex Archaeology*

In the environmental lab, Chris Stevens and Nikki Mulhall are delicately picking out charred plant remains from residue of processed soil samples. These remains will be analysed, the plants identified and then cross-referenced with information about the features on site where they were excavated to see what conclusions may be drawn. For example, what were the people from the site eating?

# GEOMATICS



*Volunteers learning and using a Total Station on previous Churches Conservation Trust project*

© Wessex Archaeology

Geomatics is the discipline of gathering, processing, and delivering spatially referenced information and is vital to modern archaeological practice. Our Geomatics team, led by Paul Cripps, are mainly in the office but today Paul is organising a fieldwork event for the Churches Conservation Trust as part of the [Festival of British Archaeology](#). You can find out more on Paul's own blog – [A Day of Archaeological Geomatics](#)

# THE GRAPHICS OFFICE

The Graphics Team are a fundamental part of the company, we rely on these talented people for a range of activities, from typesetting and providing figures for reports to artefact and reconstruction illustration to creating exhibitions and posters.



*Here you can see Kitty drawing a Palaeolithic handaxe found in a marine aggregate dredging area.*

## GETTING OUT AND ABOUT

Wessex Archaeology is a charitable trust with an educational remit to promote archaeology. As a result, we have dedicated staff for working with the public, who unsurprisingly decided to provide their own material for Day of Archaeology.

Sarah Phillips, Senior Learning and Access Officer had the least exciting day. This is sadly the price of heading up the team but her blog – *The Glamour of Outreach* – illustrates that it is not all fun and games, admin exists in outreach too.





*CBA Community Archaeology trainee Angus, our experimental archaeologist © Angus Forshaw*

Having said that our CBA funded Community Archaeology Trainee Placement, Angus Forshaw had a great day on site working on Barrow Clump as part of [Operation Nightingale](#) . You can find out more about the site and project on his blog – A Day with Operation Nightingale



*Laura interviewing Alex, a Rifleman for Project Florence podcast © Wessex Archaeology*

While Laura Joyner, the [Project Florence](#) Officer was also out at Barrow Clump working with young film volunteers and filmmakers from Salisbury Arts centre on a documentary. You can read about her day on the Project Florence's Day of Archaeology blog – [Lights, Camera, Action](#).

## **THE END OF THE TOUR**

So that is a brief tour of Wessex Archaeology and you have only seen a fraction of what is going on here today. Before I finish this blog, I have to mention the people not shown here at all, our board of trustees, the directors, project managers, our amazing finance team and admin staff that keep the company running so that we can do all these activities.

This is just one day at Wessex Archaeology, the next might be completely different, and you never know what you will discover.