

SOMETIMES YOU JUST HAVE TO DEBUNK IT.

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On the Day of Archaeology, we archaeologists get together and blog about all the different ways we do archaeology. Take a moment and browse this awesome site and you'll find blogs on digging, research, office work, and life after grad school. You'll also read about Public Archaeology (of which Day of Archaeology is part), the reaching out to the public, and making archaeology accessible to the public.

I am a HUGE fan of public archaeology, but I take a slightly different twist on it.

I am a Debunker. I use real archaeology to debunk pseudoarchaeology.

Four years ago I started a blog called [ArchyFantasies](#), where I've tackled everything from the infamous [10 Most Puzzling Ancient Artifacts](#) to the current project of deciding [who discovered America first](#). I also discuss [archaeological history looking at it from the founding mother's perspectives](#) and I try to answer questions people send me about the weird, wacky world of archaeology.

Four years and going I'm pretty pleased with the blog, and I'm even more pleased with how it's grown. For the last three years now I have given presentations on debunking pseudoarchaeology at Gen Con, Incon, and The Center for Inquiry in Indianapolis. Hey I'm a gaming geek, and my goal is to reach out to everyday people. I also work with children doing mock-digs and teaching them about context and the archaeological process. I love reaching out to people and I'm really glad my little blog has led to me being able to do more.

Still, debunking pseudoarchaeology is incredibly important, as is understanding why pseudoarchaeology is so popular and persists in modern time.



Was Mound A built by some vanished and forgotten civilization, or by basket load by early Natives?

Pseudoarchaeology makes the past fun, mysterious, and special. Through the manipulation of facts and evidence, sometimes resorting to simply making them up, Pseudoarchaeology tells us that Aliens visited the planet thousands of years ago, humans and dinosaurs lived together in harmony, and a now vanished race of people known as Atlantean pretty much created all culture and all of technology. It can validate cultural, racial, and national identities, like Afrocentrism or the Bosnian Pyramids. It can bolster religious validity like with Creationism. It can allow for thinly veiled racism like the total disregard of local native peoples with the Mysterious Mound Builders or insisting Aliens did everything for “primitive” ancient peoples. It can make the individual person special too because they now become the only ones to know the Truth, and “mainstream” archaeologists are part of a worldwide conspiracy to hide the Truth.

Compare this to the real world of archaeology. The real, sweaty, labor intensive, research heavy, jargon laden, paper writing world of archaeology. Half the time when you start telling the average person how you’re comparing the ground-truthing of a magnetometer reading with the traditional interpretation of said magnetometer reading you can watch their eyes cross as they try to stay politely interested. The other half of the time they want to know if you’ve found gold or dinosaurs.



It's not a spaceship, it's a magnetometer.

The public loves archaeology; we see evidence of this with the success and endurance of every Indiana Jones movie (whether or not they were good), the success of TV shows like Time Team and Ancient Aliens (now in its 5th season) and the popularity of magazines like Archaeology and Popular Archaeology. The problem isn't the public's lack of interest; it's the public's inability to get a hold of good information.



An aspect of real archaeology, digging deep, by hand.

With shows like Diggers, American Diggers, Ancient Aliens, other random shows about the lost secrets of Atlantis and thousands of books/websites/podcasts discussing Viking Mound Builders in America, Alien skulls, Giant Burials, the fifth discovery of Noah's Arch, Aliens building the Pyramids, Bigfoot, and my personal favorite, how all of us "mainstream" archaeologists are trying to keep the TRUTH from the public, it's hard for the public to figure out what's what. Especially when academic archaeology is basically silent, particularly on these topics.



Another tick infested aspect of archaeology. Survey in the woods.

In the March 2013 issue of the SAA's Archaeological Record, David S. Anderson, Jeb J. Card, and Kenneth L. Feder made a plea to the archaeological community to band together to reclaim the public perception of Archaeology and to understand why pseudoarchaeology persists. Anderson et. al. thinks this attempt in understanding should be part of our jobs as professional archaeologists (2013:26). They see ignoring pseudoarchaeology as dismissing an important element of human culture (2013:26). They tell us we can't ignore the modern popular relationship with the material past simply because it's annoying (2013:27).



Working with the public can be rewarding and get things done.

I agree whole-heartedly.

We as archaeologists need to address pseudoarchaeology when we see/hear it. We need more blogs like mine and Bad Archaeology. We need some skeptical Podcasts that address pseudoarchaeology and cover the actual archaeology behind those stories. We need more shows akin to Time Team that can directly compete with shows like Diggers et al. If we can't do that, we need to address pseudoarchaeology in the classroom, in the local newspapers, and even in the public sphere.

Four years ago I started a simple blog on addressing pseudoarchaeology, I did it in my spare time, and it's blossomed into a whole lot more. I challenge everyone posting on the Day of Archaeology blog to dedicate one post on their own blogs/websites on the topic. I'll even offer to host the post on my own blog! Let's do it, let's band together and give the public what they really want, solid facts about real archaeology.