

RESEARCH IN ARCHAEOLOGY – A DAY IN THE ARCHIVES

July 26, 2013 Cath Poucher Day of Archaeology
2013 Archaeology, Archive, archives, buildings, documents, Kenilworth Castle, listed buildings, Post
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This time last year I was finishing writing up my postgraduate degree thesis whilst panicking amongst books, AutoCAD and copious amounts of tea. As I procrastinated on twitter (after doing lots of work, of course) I avidly followed last years Day of Archaeology, wondering to myself if I'd be in a position to post anything for the next event.

Fast forward a year and here I am telling you all my day in archaeology. I'm Cath Poucher and I've just started my new job as Archives Services Officer for English Heritage in their archives:

<http://www.englishheritagearchives.org.uk/>

This job is perfect for me as it combines my love of research, archaeology and working with the public. Although I'm very new (I only started this month) I am thoroughly enjoying it and am learning something new every day, and this for me is the most important part of any career or volunteer project. My daily life does not directly involve working in a "traditional" archaeological setting; I do not excavate or deal with physical remains on a daily basis. Nevertheless, I assist both heritage professionals and members of the public alike to carry out a variety of projects by helping them to undertake documentary research, and this is a very important part of archaeology.

My day started with the usual morning check of emails and answering requests from previous enquiries I have already carried out and undertaken. A big part of my day involves carrying out research of our archival holdings on behalf of the public, whether on their house or searching for plans of a particular English Heritage property. This means that I often have to search and handle a variety of archives ranging from measured drawings and 18th and 19th century building sales catalogues to photographs. These photographs can range in date from present day to the 19th century.

Today was no different to this; I have been completing research about small listed houses in Gloucestershire and searching plans and elevations of Osbourne House, Isle of Wight and Kenilworth Castle, Warwickshire. Each day is different in that I never know what I am going to be doing one day to the next, and this is what makes me so passionate about what I do. In the afternoon, I contacted customers and sent out the information I had found, and answered queries about our archives. I'm still learning my job but am enjoying every minute- especially learning about different areas of England I didn't know anything about. At the end of the day I organised visits to the archive for customers and started new enquiries, ordering some archives from our cold store. Much of our holdings is fragile and is stored in climate controlled conditions and has to be acclimatised to room temperature before it can be viewed. As this takes 24 hours, ordering in advance is essential.

So this is my day in archaeology; probably not as muddy as others, but equally fascinating and I'm looking forward to many more...

(Note: the words, thoughts, and opinions expressed here are entirely my own.)