

1ST DIG

August 1, 2013 Jane Heathcote Day of Archaeology 2013, Excavation, Iron
Age Anthropology, Archaeology, Bodfari Hillfort, Excavation, North Wales, Time Team

On the Day of Archaeology 2013, I was on the 3rd day of 4 of my very 1st archaeological dig. I was a volunteer at Bodfari Hillfort in North Wales, one of several hillforts on the Clwydian Range, the smallest and apparently the steepest!

I have had no previous formal training or any kind archaeological experience other than visiting castles & museum etc. and watching TV programs such as Time Team. So I was very keen to learn as much as possible whilst volunteering but also very aware that the team were only going to be onsite for 2 weeks. I felt a little torn between just getting stuck in and questioning every action and decision the Archaeologists were making. I soon realised that the Archaeologists were quite happy to explain their methods and ideas to me and I think we all found the natural cadence of the team we were allocated to.

I was helping to dig trench three at the southern end of the hillfort. The section I was excavating was an extension which cut across the inner and middle ramparts; the team had found a wall structure at the middle rampart with a rubble and soil section packed behind, there was also a section of bedrock further in towards the inner ramparts which the Archaeologists thought could have been used to build the wall. These structures had all shown as anomalies on the geophysical image data taken in 2012.

I was chasing out the edge of the wall with my trowel, hopefully to reveal a nice straight line, we hadn't gone very far down at this point so much more work was to be done to be sure that this was indeed a wall structure, before that could happen all digging, mattocking and troweling stopped for soil sampling and measuring. Although I'd never done this before the Archaeologists and the more experienced volunteers explained everything to me so I was able to get directly involved in the measuring and sampling, not rocket science I know but with limited time for the team to get as much done as possible, I really appreciated this attention.



The Archaeologists also didn't seem to mind my close attention while they were discussing what their thoughts were on what they were looking at and during and after the planning stage. I was quite intrigued with their discussions and thought process's especially when they didn't quite agree with each other, I found it absolutely fascinating to watch and to listen to.

By the time I left the dig the next day, the last hour being thwarted by a thunder storm, we were not really any closer to working out whether the wall was a wall, if it was Iron Age or Roman and where if anywhere there is a soil level down there. There are still so many unanswered questions, though I think that this is the nature of Archaeology and why we all love it so much.

Many thanks to Gary Lock and John Pouncett and their brilliant Bodfari13 team of Archaeologist and volunteers. Thank you.