

# MY LIFE AS AN ARCHAEOLOGIST IN A CRIMINOLOGY CENTRE

July 26, 2013 Suzie Thomas Community Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2013, Publishing Criminology, Glasgow, Heritage crime, Illicit antiquities, Research

Friday 26th July, 2013.

Hello. My name is Suzie Thomas, and I'm a [Research Associate](#) at the [Scottish Centre for Crime and Justice Research](#), at the [University of Glasgow](#). I work on a really exciting project, so exciting that the [European Research Council](#) decided to fund it for a whole four years (we are well into year 2 at the moment). Our project is called [Trafficking Culture](#), and as is stated on the website's home page: 'Trafficking Culture aims to produce an evidence-based picture of the contemporary global trade in looted cultural objects.' It's interdisciplinary, which makes for a rich and informative working environment.

We work at a global level, with regional research taking place in parts of South America, South East Asia and Eastern Europe, to name but a few areas. We have PhD students attached to the project, all of whom have really exciting research topics planned. We also disseminate useful information through our website, such as an ever-growing resource of relevant [publications](#), and often previously-unseen or previously-unavailable [data](#) (which we hope fellow researchers can use in some way). My favourite section by far though is our [Encyclopedia](#), in which we present better (and also less well) known case studies of looting, theft and trafficking, and also some useful terminology. We all write entries for the encyclopedia, and sometimes guest writers



*The Homepage of Trafficking Culture*

provide entries for us too, like this interesting piece on the [Everbeek Roman Silver Hoard](#) in Belgium. Some of my own entries include pieces about the thefts from, and recoveries to, the [Egyptian Museum in Cairo](#), the saga of the [Salisbury Hoard](#), and definitions of looting-related terms like [Tombarolo](#).



*Me, during my Visiting Fellowship at the University of Helsinki in March/April. I like cold places, and I really like finding out about cultural object issues that are less well known.*

So, as you can see, we have a pretty cool project here. In fact, two of my colleagues are in Cambodia and one is in Bolivia on fieldwork as we speak. And what about me, on today the official Day of Archaeology? I'm in Glasgow.

I had visits to Finland and Estonia (I'm interested in the Baltic region) earlier in the year, and I even got to be a [keynote speaker](#), for the first time in my career, in Brussels back in May. But right now, I have a very quiet office and lots of transcribing to do. I can't tell you the content of the transcripts, and our informants are completely anonymised. But let me assure you, it is really interesting stuff. Which makes up for the fact that it is still transcribing.

Later on today, I will probably review a draft chapter for a new book which I am co-editing with a Criminology colleague from Loughborough, which will be all about Heritage and Crime. This book will cover some of the issues around global trafficking of looted cultural objects, but will also explore other types of crime that can affect heritage, with some very interesting case studies from different parts of the world. I am excited about this, too.

I'm also primarily responsible for our social media presence on Facebook and Twitter, so it would be remiss of me not to ask you to 'Like' us ([www.facebook.com/TraffickingCulture](http://www.facebook.com/TraffickingCulture)), and to follow us ([@CultureTraffic](https://twitter.com/CultureTraffic)). For Tumblr fans, we even have one of these ([traffickingculture.tumblr.com](http://traffickingculture.tumblr.com)).

In what I optimistically refer to as my 'spare time', I am also one of three Editors (joined recently by two Assistant Editors) for a brand new Journal – the [Journal of Community Archaeology and Heritage](#). This also has Twitter ([@CommunityArchae](https://twitter.com/CommunityArchae)), a blog ([journalcah.blogspot.co.uk](http://journalcah.blogspot.co.uk)), and Facebook ([www.facebook.com/JournalOfCommunityArchaeologyAndHeritage](http://www.facebook.com/JournalOfCommunityArchaeologyAndHeritage)).

This is my other passion, you see. As well as trying to understand and maybe even suggest solutions to the global problem of smuggled and trafficked cultural objects, I also really love

community archaeology. It's just such a great idea, and it gets more and more interesting as you start to explore how it is developing in different ways and to different extents in various cultural, socio-economic and legislative settings across the world. We're all very excited for the papers that will appear in the journal to reflect this rich diversity, and are looking forward to its official launch in 2014.

Later, I'm away for the weekend. This has nothing to do with 'the day job' or even JCAH, but I am excited about it.