

CONFESSIONS OF AN ARCHAEOLOGIST

July 11, 2014 l.johansson Day of Archaeology 2014, Excavation Archaeological sub-disciplines, archaeologist, Archaeology, Finland, full-time archaeologist, maritime archaeology, Pargas, Portsmouth Historic Dockyard, Royal Navy, SCC Archaeology Unit, southampton, Southampton City Council Archaeology Unit, St. Mary's Church, United Kingdom, University of Wales

Hello!

My name is Laura Johansson and I am an archaeologist. I am originally from Pargas, Finland, but moved to the UK in 2010 to do my undergraduate in archaeology at the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David. My interest in archaeology stretch back to my early teenage years, and since my passion for archaeology has only grown. My real passion though is for maritime archaeology and I am currently studying for an MA in Maritime Archaeology in Southampton. University will start back up in September, but up until then I am employed as a full-time archaeologist for Southampton City Council Archaeology Unit and on annualised hours as a museum guide for The National Museum of the Royal Navy, which is based in Portsmouth Historic Dockyard.

I've chosen to write an account of one of my days at the Medieval Chantry Dig in Southampton, working for the SCC Archaeology Unit. We are currently clearing out any archaeology from an area where the Drew Smith Group is planning to build a new set of flats. As mentioned before, this site has previously been the location of a medieval chantry which was connected with St. Mary's Church, located just across the road. In this case there is a substantial amount of documentation connected to our site, which has allowed us to understand what the different medieval features on the site may be. However, there are also several Saxon pits, containing a substantial amount of animal bones.

On this particular day I had just started digging a new feature. So far the theory is that the feature is a pit of unknown date which is being cut by a ditch which seems to be running across a large part of the site. This job is my first paid full-time position in commercial archaeology (yay me!) and it is refreshing to get to work in a different side of archaeology (previously I have mainly participated in digs organised by universities). Surprisingly (to me) it is quite different! I was told today that in contemporary British Commercial Archaeology we no longer use trowels for other things than cleaning the mud out of our boots. However, (if archaeology was a religion) I did feel like a sinner in church as I was shovelling out the layers of my pit!

Unfortunately I can't really tell you anything interesting about my feature as I don't know much myself. The dig started in the middle of April this year and we are now running on the last few weeks. Unfortunately time is against us and we are having speed up the process a bit (we are like digging machines!), but fortunately it looks like there is not too much left to do. Hopefully the weather will be with us these last few days as we otherwise will be sat in the office doing finds washing (which isn't too bad either!).

It has always been my intention to pursue a degree in archaeology after university. My interests are quite wide, but my expertise lies mainly within British and Finnish archaeology. One of my greatest passions is to promote archaeology to the wider public, which is something I am hoping to continue to do in the future. Among other things I am planning to partly base my MA dissertation project on public outreach so

we shall see how it goes! Wish me luck!

Laura

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Disclaimer: All photos were taken by the author, except the Google map images.