

# PLANS, LISTS, CONTEXT SHEETS, LEVELS, SECTIONS, PHOTOS, AND BACK TO THE PLANS: ARCHIVAL CLEAN UP AT BRISTOL DIG BERKELEY

July 12, 2014 Emily\_Glass Anglo-Saxon, Day of Archaeology 2014, Early Medieval, Education, Excavation, Medieval, Post Medieval, Roman Anthropology, archaeological recording, Archaeology, archives, Berkeley Castle, Bristol Dig Berkeley, Contexts, digging, Excavation, Harris Matrix, Knowledge, Mark Horton, Post-excavation, Stratigraphy, Stuart Prior, University of Bristol

My name is Emily Glass and together with my co-supervisor at Bristol Dig Berkeley, Sian Thomas, we have been wading through piles of drawings, lists and context sheets that were created over four weeks of digging at Berkeley Castle in Gloucestershire. This project has been an annual fixture of the University of Bristol's Archaeology and Anthropology [department for ten years](#) under the direction of Professor Mark Horton and Dr Stuart Prior. The excavation provides valuable practical experience for students during their three year degree and for any willing post-graduates! During the 2014 season the team worked in Nelme's Paddock (a field to the front of the Castle) on Trenches 8 and 14 – for which the paperwork now needs looking over for any glaring errors.



*Emily and Sian PX-ing the Berkeley Castle excavation*

Often seen as the 'boring' side of archaeology – the less hands-on, indoor work of checking and cross-referencing any excavation archive is a crucial part of the process. Using the archaeological features and finds to phase the sequence of events is the basis for interpreting your site. The mantra that most archaeologists have been brought up on is that 'the archaeology does not lie' – so no matter how much you try to cram that theory of yours into what the evidence is telling you, if it won't fit then it's just plain

wrong! All that needs doing next is to fit this into the wider scheme of what was going on at that particular time in that particular area and you have your story! Simple, right??

One thing about checking an archive is that no matter how long you THINK it's going to take – it will always take longer and often drive you mad in the process of going back and forward between lists, sheets, numbers, drawings, images and notebooks until you feel like you're drowning in paperwork! However, on occasion the Post-ex process can throw up something completely unexpected – such as our 2014 Finds Team discovering a box containing [ceramic vessels from Ur](#)! Then, when all calms down and you finally feel you're coming out of the tunnel – you realise that your final Harris Matrix doesn't work and the cycle of despair continues!



*“Tell Us Your Secrets Trench 8....”*

Trench 8 has been open now since 2009 so we have many, many drawings and records that Sian has kept on top of year on year. She even has an A1 sized trench matrix which looks amazing, but of course needs a bit of jiggling! On this Day of Archaeology we sorted out finished drawings to be scanned, filed sheets into folders and updated the context check-list. Some context sheets were checked off, whereas others are ongoing and will be completed at the [Berkeley Summer School](#) in August. So far we can track a broadly continuous sequence of use through buildings, roads, ditches and pits from the Roman period through to Saxon, then Norman, onto Medieval, Tudor and Elizabethan times. The latest phase represented is the Georgian use of the Paddock as a kitchen garden. So it's not surprising that the sequence keeps shifting!

General niggles in the records were of the usual variety: confusion about compass orientations, forgetting to transfer levels back onto paperwork (or even work them out!), back-to-front matrices and terrible handwriting! All joking aside, completing the record checking of an archaeological archive to a high

standard is not only the right thing to do ethically and morally (all archaeology being destruction / to dismantle is to understand and all that), but it is also very satisfying, especially when the job is ticked off as DONE!

Happy Day of Archaeology 2014!

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