

# USING ARCHAEOLOGY TO PROMOTE THE STUDY OF STEM SUBJECTS

July 26, 2015   castlesandcoprolites   Buildings,Explore  
Posts, Industrial, Science   bridges, Engineering,Geoarchaeology, geoscience, Heritage, Newcastle, Romans,STEM

My Day of Archaeology is a bit different to previous years. Back in 2012 and 2013 I was doing lab work (for [Feeding Stonehenge](#) and [Paisley Caves](#) respectively) and in 2014 I was doing [teaching preparation and looking at microscope slides](#). This year I am technically not doing archaeology at all, though I have been using archaeology. Let me explain – I am a geoarchaeologist, which means I use methods and approaches from geoscience to address questions about the human past. In my current job, which I just started this month, a large part of my role is trying to increase the numbers of students (and women in particular) studying [Civil Engineering and Geosciences at Newcastle University](#). Like archaeology with the popular image of adventure and Indiana Jones, civil engineering has it's own public image (bridges, buildings! machinery!) and if you say geoscience, the first thing most people think of is rocks. Compared to the image of archaeology which has a broad appeal, it can be much harder to convince people that civil engineering is something they would enjoy. Likewise, there is much more to geoscience than rocks (though personally I am quite a fan of rocks...). This is where the archaeology comes in.

For my Day of Archaeology, I have been putting together outreach events for schools and families, to try and broaden the appeal of geosciences, and to convey the diversity and breadth of the subject. One of the talks I am doing is on Geoscience and Archaeology, using case studies from archaeology to show how we can apply geoscience methods in ways people might not have thought about. I am also working with the [Great North Museum: Hancock](#), to develop geoscience inspired activities for [Earth Science Week](#) in October. In a similar vein, I have been writing a blog post (not yet published), on the links between civil engineering and heritage. Back to the bridges stereotype, many famous bridges (or civil engineering structures in general), have become part of the cultural heritage of a place, and it could be argued that their symbolic function is equally as important as their practical one. The Golden Gate, Millau Viaduct, London's Tower Bridge – all have become iconic symbols of a region or city. In Scotland, the Forth Bridge was recently awarded UNESCO World Heritage status. And of course anyone with an interest in Roman archaeology knows the importance of bridges as material culture. Newcastle itself was known as [Pons Aelius \(Hadrian's Bridge\) to the Romans!](#) Archaeology is everywhere, even where you may least expect it.



*Bridges: iconic landmarks and heritage symbols (images from Wikipedia)*