

# TALES FROM THE STORES

July 24, 2015 Alice\_Forward Archives, Curation, Explore Posts, Science archives, Historic England, Zooarchaeology

I am the maternity cover for the Archaeological Archives Curator at Fort Cumberland, Portsmouth. The team at the Fort are part of Historic England and provide advisory services to the archaeological sector as well as carrying out research. My post here at the Fort is incredibly varied. We have a number of stores in which the archaeological archives for projects carried out by Excavation and Analysis are maintained. The collections here are not permanent; instead we hold archives that are here for post-excavation assessment and analysis. We have a number of large sites; [Raunds](#) and [Whitby Abbey](#) to name two.

We also maintain paper and photographic archives from current and older projects. In particular, the Conservation team have a large archive that documents the work they have undertaken since 1950, initially as part of the Ancient Monuments Laboratory and more recently (1999 – this is recent for archaeology) as part of the Excavation and Analysis team here at the Fort. Their archive includes x-rays and ledgers detailing the work carried out on archaeological artefacts from sites across England.

My day to day role is to make sure that the stores are in working order, that the collections are maintained in a good condition and to enable access to the material. We have a large number of enquiries associated with the collections and the amount of data available to the public is extensive. We hold a large [zooarchaeological reference collection](#) and this includes [a herd of sheep](#). Our reference collections are in continued use by both our internal specialists and visiting researchers.

The Fort is an incredible place to work. Fort Cumberland is situated on the south east tip of Portsea Island and as a result the weather coming off the sea is at times slightly bonkers. I had never properly experienced sea mist until I started working here. We also have some brilliant wildlife with foxes, a small owl, a kestrel, hibernating butterflies and swifts to name a few. Last month, I chased a moth around the garden behind my office to discover exactly what the bright, deep pink fluttery thing really was (the [Cinnabar \*Tyria jacobaeae\*](#)).

As well as the wildlife I also support a team of wonderful colleagues. We are currently in the process of implementing our digital archiving procedures. As you can imagine, this is a large task, with huge amounts of data being created by the Archaeology, Conservation, Technology, Dating and Enviro teams every day.

Today is relatively quiet for me. I am travelling North next week to deposit a number of archives and so I have been liaising with Curators at the English Heritage Helmsley and Wrest Park stores. We also helped the Dendrochronology team find space for the Dendro sample reference collection and I am sorting out the transfer of some of these cores to Sheffield University where they will be used for teaching. I have

also been involved in some of the post-excavation work on our [National Archaeological Identification Survey](#)(NAIS) sites and this will be my afternoon's task, bringing our assessment report to completion.