

A DAY OF ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE PIPELINE

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On a day when the July weather in London is doing the best impression of a combination of mid October and the moment after Mrs Noah announced, "It's just started raining dear", it is no bad thing that a working day in today's archaeology can include being desk based, alternating thinking [OK staring out of the window], with monitoring the latest Twitter feeds, Facebook posts and media websites in search of stories. Today of course it also includes the somewhat surreal experience of breaking off from writing and editing an on-line blog to write this piece for an on-line blog.

Although I undertake my own research and undertake research work and consultancy for various agencies and media companies today has mostly been about following up stories for thePipeLine. That is why this morning began with an e-mail conversation with contacts in the Midlands, Sweden and Egypt who are trying to get the Temporary Export ban on the statue of Sekhemka extended in order that talks can take place to keep the statue on public display, preferably in the UK. It is approaching crunch time- the temporary ban runs out on 29 July, next Wednesday and so far the Culture Minister is refusing to engage with the Save Sekhemka lobby because they have taken the principled stance that they won't raise money to buy the statue because the initial sale, for £15.76 million at Christie's last Summer, was unethical, so to raise money would be to reward this. That story is one which will develop over the weekend and into next week.

Then it was monitoring the share price and message boards regarding Odyssey Marine Exploration, the Florida based treasure hunting company who have a contract from the Maritime Heritage Foundation to salvage material from the wreck of HMS Victory 1744. This is a story I have been following and writing about for over three years and it still has a way to go. Particularly as today also happens to be the last day of a public consultation over a licence application by the MHF to the Marine Management Organisation. The outcome of that application will be interesting to say the least. Watch this space as it is going to be one of the major archaeological stories of the year which ever way it turns out and sadly not because of the archaeology.

Then on to Twitter and what is worth tweeting about, commenting about at greater length on Facebook or parking for future research and reference [and what is worth flushing down the electronic disposal unit].

There is a provocative article in the Guardian advocating reintroducing Museum charges in the UK, a report into falling use of libraries by under 18's and the implications of the Government ignoring and suppressing the advice of an expert panel on neonicotinoid pesticides in the face of a commercial lobby from the National Farmers Union, which could have implications for expert advice in heritage matters. In the end I park that one for future use and go with comments on the Museum charges piece on Twitter.

For a start the author appears to equate Museums with Art Galleries when traditionally the research and archive functions of the two types of institution are very different. It also appears to play to the Government's "everything has a price you can buy into if you want to" agenda and to my mind conserving an archive of local, national and world culture and cultural material for the longterm is a somewhat different cultural ask than a subscription to watch Sky or BT Sport. Sometimes we are consumers and

sometimes we are conservationists on behalf of ourselves and future generations and we confuse the two at our peril.

At the end of the day- and Friday night and Pizza Night in this household-so it is time to upload this and head for the kitchen- my eye is also drawn back to the posts under the #dayofarch which are a fantastic reminder of why we do this thing called archaeology and why thePipeline and other campaigners and commentators exist to hold to account the people who would seek to damage or abuse it, or seek to debase the language and ideas of history and archaeology.

Let's stay, open source, exciting and international and whatever gets thrown at us let's keep digging literally and metaphorically, remembering it is

OUR PAST OUR FUTURE OUR CHOICE!

Andy Brockman
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Editor of thePipeLine

PS: The History Channel has just tweeted about the new series of "Counting Cars" says it all really...