

# WHAT ARCHAEOLOGISTS DO WHEN THEY AREN'T AT WORK (AKA MORE ARCHAEOLOGY...)

July 24, 2015 Cath Poucher Archives, Explore Posts archives, CIfA, Equality and Diversity, Feminism, Volunteer

I have been taking part in the Day of Archaeology for the past two years, since I managed to bag my first full time job in the heritage sector. I remember a few years ago, before this momentous occasion, watching enviously from the side lines wishing that I could join in and be a part of something that combines both my love of archaeology, blogging, and communicating my passion for archaeology to a wider audience. At this tender, naive age however, I did not feel able to join in: while I was certainly an archaeology graduate I didn't have an archaeology *job* yet (despite being heavily involved in numerous volunteer projects, as most recent graduates are). Fast forward a few years, and both my previous #DayOfArch posts have been about my current job – working in a fairly big heritage organisation in their archives, undertaking archival research, processing orders, and delving into vast archive stores on behalf of various clients. Despite being a few years in, despite how busy it can get, and despite how stressful working with the public can sometimes be, I do still enjoy my job.

For the first time on the Day of Archaeology itself, I'm not just doing my 'paid' work. I'm actually doing some of the 'extra-curricular work', too. And I thought – why not talk about that instead? I desperately wish I had been confident enough to blog on the first Day of Archaeology I saw all those years ago about the volunteer work I was doing prior to finally getting a paid job in heritage. For me, archaeology/heritage is one of those industries where we rely on volunteers. They are an integral and vital part of our community, and even those among us who are "proper" archaeologists still admittedly volunteer much of our spare time away (to the amazement of some friends in more "sensible" jobs who are amazed at how much time and expertise us archaeologists, on average, give away for free). Without volunteers we would not be able to function; many museums and heritage sites would close and many projects, like the Day of Archaeology itself, would not exist without both professional archaeologists and keen amateurs alike investing spare time to keep this (in my opinion, vital) industry afloat. So I guess my Day of Archaeology blog is a plea to all the volunteers – You may not be getting paid, but you are just as important, if not more so, and therefore have just as much right to post on this blog as anyone else! So get writing....

Okay, so what have I being doing today? Well this morning started off relatively normal – I spent the morning working at my paid job in the archive – wrapping up research enquiries, completing orders for customers, and finishing off any outstanding paperwork because I'm heading to Yorkshire tonight for my week off. The last few months have been a bit stressful, and have put even my fairly organised mind to the test, so a week of lying in, seeing the family, and having a spa day is just what the doctor ordered. There is something really nice about clearing a desk and setting an out of office on your emails for a week, isn't there?! No matter how much you love your job!



*Me in the archive (cold store) at work...*

The afternoon and evening (excluding manic packing and catching buses and trains) involves the other side of my archaeology life – the Chartered Institute for Archaeologists (CIfA). I attended the CIfA conference in Cardiff in April (I wrote a [blog about the session on my website](#)) and while I was panicking about a session I was chairing in my capacity/involvement as secretary of the Buildings Archeology Group, I also decided to attend the Glass Ceilings session ran by Paul Belford and Hilary Orange. This session promised from the outset to get my feelings all in a frenzy, as feminism and equality and diversity in archaeology is something I'm deeply passionate about. Needless to say I wasn't disappointed, and on the back of this session two new projects arose – the hopeful CIfA Equality and Diversity Special Interest Group (E & D SIG), and the Twitter project based on [Everyday Sexism](#) (by Laura Bates), '#EveryDIGSexism'. This is a Twitter feed and eventual website. Needless to say, I threw myself in and offered to be involved with them both.

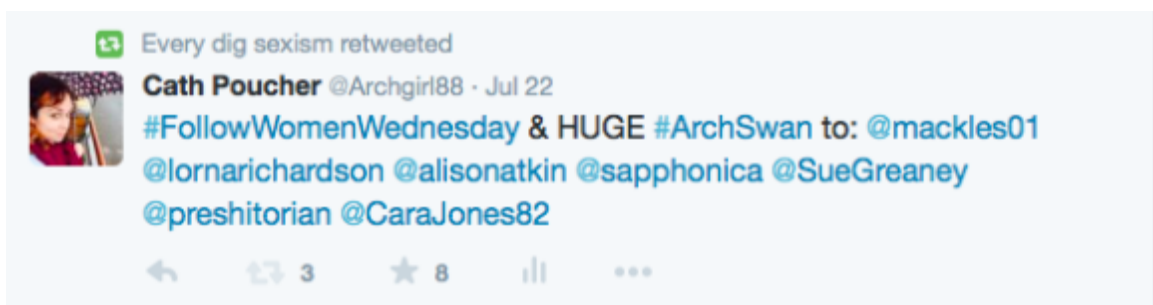
At the time of writing, the hopeful E & D SIG had submitted its proposal for ratification so we could (fingers crossed) be a proper, functioning, affiliated group and start really making a difference. Until confirmation of our official group status was received, we were temporarily calling ourselves the 'E & D network' and were already planning big things; working out short term and long term aims, writing to other societies and organisations/societies to discuss gender inequality and planning conference sessions and AGM's. So my afternoon is being spent compiling together a wide range of comments, to create one *amazing* conference

session. The session itself is currently in the “submission for approval” stage, and is already looking really exciting and may be something we can take forward and use for other events we are planning, regardless of whether the session is accepted or not.

The rest of my time is, unsurprisingly for those who know me, being spent juggling multiple social media platforms for multiple organisations I’m involved with – all in a voluntary capacity (of course), and all archaeology based (except my personal account). One Twitter feed that was really hectic only the other evening was the other project I’ve mentioned – the [Every DIG Sexism project](#). This project is still in its infancy, and has yet to take off in the way the founder and others such as myself who are also involved envisage, purely due to how busy we all are. The main use at the moment is Twitter, where we call out sexism in archaeology and heritage using the [#EveryDIGSexism](#) hashtag. This has already become one of those hashtags where you get far too many emotive feelings for all the wrong reasons, get despondent and angry at some comments and examples that are sent in, but it also inspires you to do even more to try and change the industry you care about. A quick trawl of the submissions we have received in the infancy of the project, before we have even scratched the surface of what we could do is heartbreaking and eye opening. We are also trying to also focus on the positives, by raising awareness of, and championing good practice in archaeology through the hashtag [#ArchSwan](#), based on the Athena Swan Scheme. This brings a warm, fuzzy glow to an otherwise bleak and depressive Twitter feed. A perfect example of this was Wednesday evening, where the EveryDIGSexism account tweeted this:



What followed for an entire evening (and into the next day) was a heartwarming, and truly amazing display of camaraderie, respect, and appreciation between the archaeology women of Twitter:



So many tweets came in, so many suggestions were made that I struggled to keep up with tweeting from the two accounts (my personal account and the @EveryDIGSexism account). Eventually I had to turn my notifications off, purely so I could get to sleep! I genuinely wasn't expecting such great feedback – and the tweets are still going on as I'm typing this on Friday! I think this has definitely inspired me to get cracking with the website, and kicking the project off big style. So all I can say is;

'watch this space, folks. Times are a changing...'

**NOTE:**

*All comments and opinions expressed in this post are the personal views of the author and do not represent any organisations (either professional roles or voluntary roles) mentioned in this post.*