

POKEMON, PHILOSOPHY AND COFFEE

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Every time I do a post for Day of Archaeology, I look back over what I wrote previously and marvel at how quickly a year has gone by, and how much things can change in that time. This year is no different, and I will start by saying how lucky I am to be writing this as an archaeologist **now employed permanently by a great university**, in my hometown of Newcastle. **Last year** I was back in Newcastle having taken a non-archaeology job, and was preparing for a life outside academia (not really through choice, but lack of other options, given that getting a full time, secure job as an archaeologist is difficult). This contrasted with the posts I wrote for **2012** (Stonehenge!), **2013** (Early humans in caves!), **2014** (Crusades! Fossil poo!), which were much more the sort of thing I guess people expect from archaeologists. Lab work and white coats, fancy microscopes, fieldwork, and all the excitement that goes with that. So what about today? Having put things on hold temporarily in 2015, in 2016 I am back to working on material from Stonehenge, and the early humans in caves is going to be a major focus for the next 3 years as **I recently got a large NERC grant to fund it** (the pilot work I told everyone about in Day of Archaeology 2013 contributed to this). I have been dealing with all of the admin that goes with it – planning project meetings, writing adverts to hire staff etc. But the main thing I have been doing *specifically* today is trying to finish a paper I have been working on for most of the year. It is a paper that I would never have been able to write without the security of my current job, and the time that is needed to read, read, read and reflect. Whilst many would call me an archaeological scientist, the paper I am working on today is a very heavy on theory. Part of what I am talking/reading about is that there shouldn't be such a distinction between the two. To those outside of archaeology, I think there is very little understanding that what we do is largely about interpretation rather than indisputable facts, though of course we strive to be as accurate as we can be. Many of us start out counting things and measuring things, only to realise that the most difficult part of archaeology is not the science at all, but making sense of all this stuff that we find in the ground and measure. There is a philosophy to this; hermeneutics is a word philosophers give to describe the theory and method of interpretation. So it's very relevant to archaeology, which is pretty much all about interpretation! Unfortunately, a lot of it is not very easy to read. If you thought archaeology and science had a lot of jargon, philosophy is ten times worse! But thinking about how we think, and how we actually create the archaeological stories that we tell people is so important. So I'll keep at it, whilst drinking a lot of coffee. So that's what I'm doing, in Starbucks. In true multi-tasking style, given that the local Starbucks is right next to a pokestop, I also managed to catch a lot of Pokemon...

