



IFA Workplace Learning Bursaries Case Studies – Rural Archaeology



- (1) Name? Liz Forster
- (2) Placement? IFA Workplace Learning Bursary Holder in Rural Archaeology with North Yorkshire County Council
- (3) Education/ previous roles? BSc (Hons) Outdoor Studies which led me to do an MPhil Landscape Archaeology at University of Oxford. Volunteer HER assistant at Staffordshire HER
- (4) Hobbies? Reading, playing the 'cello, walking, stewarding at the Greenbelt Arts festival in the summer, climbing
- (5) Favourite archaeological person, book, site or object? Stokesay Castle in Shropshire, my family must be some of its most frequent visitors
- (6) Where did you see the placement advertised and what inspired you to apply? I saw the advertisement on the BAJR website, and realised that it was what I'd just spent the last 9 months looking for!
- (7) How did you feel when you were offered the post? Slightly shocked, followed by bouncing off the walls! I'd just got off the train on my way home from the interview so I guess the other people around probably thought I was a bit mad!
- (8) Best/worst thing about the placement?
Best thing: Working with and learning from lots of friendly people who put up with my incessant questions. Also learning to gauge office stress levels by the quantity of cake in the kitchen (at peak stress, there will be at least 2 cakes in the kitchen every day)
Worst thing: either getting chased by sheep when I was working with the Yorkshire Dales, or having to remember my job title!
- (9) Biggest achievement/biggest challenge?
Biggest achievement: In terms of physical size, this would be re-shelving half of the HER after we moved offices. Otherwise, single-handedly completing a Farm Environment Plan for an Estate of over 1000 ha which was covered in very complex cropmarks and unmapped earthworks.
Biggest Challenge: Doing a presentation at the IFA Conference, I'm not used to public speaking!
- (10) What have you learnt so far? How to: complete Farm Environment Plans (FEPs); interpret cropmarks from the National Mapping Projects; check weekly planning lists; work MapInfo; translate the Craven HLC data into North Yorkshire HLC Data; Use HBSMR; do fancy things with PowerPoint
Also I have been able to do mini-placements with the North York Moors National Park, the Yorkshire Dales National Park, English Heritage and Natural England; which gave me the chance of seeing how different organisations approach the archaeology in North Yorkshire
- (11) Future plans/future ambitions? Use and expand on the skills I've learnt this year to progress my career and add new skills such as excavation and building survey to these. My long term ambition is to revisit the theme of my Masters Thesis by doing a PHD on the hillforts of the Welsh Marches
- (12) What advice would you give to other people wanting to apply for a training placement? Never underestimate the power of the BAJR website!
It is possible to be an archaeologist without having spent any time in a trench, although it does lead to incredulous silences, looks or outbursts when you admit it!