

**Reflecting on your current working practice, describe your working routine for a day, showing how you prioritise, delegate, and deliver tasks, and how you ensure that they meet the required standards within the time available. How do you manage the need to communicate effectively with different audiences? (20%, 2000 words or equivalent)**

My role within MOLA Stansted is varied. While my official job title is 'Finds and Environmental Processor' and am supposed to split my time 50/50 between finds processing and sample processing, I also find myself doing a fair amount of archive preparation. My daily routine in terms of tasks varies depending on which area of work I am prioritising that day or week though my approach to managing my tasks remains the same. For the purpose of this essay, I have chosen to focus on a week as opposed to a day as it better allows me to answer the question – this week is represented in Figure 1. This essay will look at my approach to managing a varied workflow and the various tasks involved and communicating to various levels within the company.

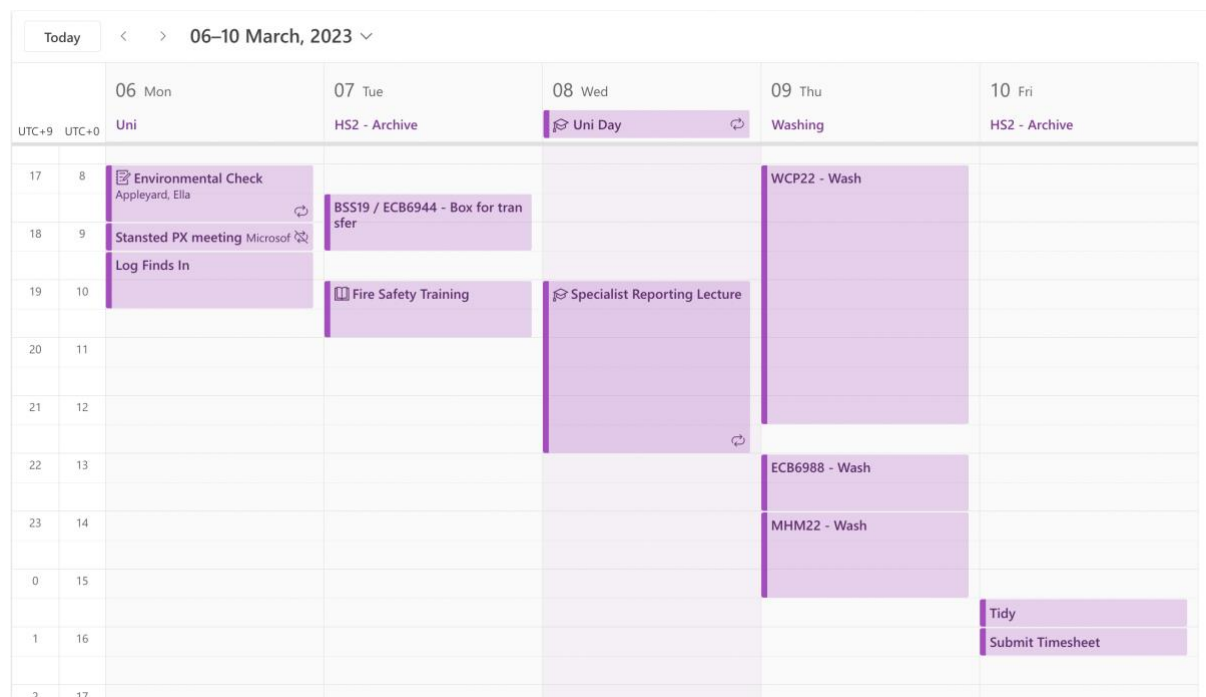


Figure 1 - A week in my calendar

I start every other Monday by completing a check on the relative humidity of our metal finds and completing a template that documents what RH% each box is compared to what it is supposed to be for its contents (i.e., iron below 20%, lead and copper etc. below 35% (Pollio 2022)) and whether the silica gel was changed. This task is something I have logged in my calendar as a recurring event for the first and third Mondays of every month at 8am as it something relatively easy to complete and a good way to start the week. It was decided that these checks should be conducted every week in winter, and every other week in summer to account for temperature fluctuations following a discussion with our in-house conservator regarding best practice and what information should be recorded (Appleyard 2022; Pollio 2022), and changed to every other week all year round following discussions with the Head of Archives about the archives at Stansted and MOLA practice

(Anastasiadou 2022). Although this task is something that can be done by anyone on the post-excavation team as it is straightforward and a guidance document is available to all staff, there are only two people who do this with regularity (myself and one other processor). However, it is usually something I complete due to my involvement and familiarity with the LP archive backlog; this was decided following a discussion with the other processor where we discussed current responsibilities and workloads and came to an agreement that as I am more involved with the archives team due to my work on the HS2 archives I should take responsibility for this task (Hudson-Brown 2022) as in the other MOLA offices it is under the responsibility of the archive team. For the weeks when I am unavailable to complete this task, the other processor is able to complete this task as the calendar event is shared with their account and I share with them if I am unavailable to complete this task – whether due to archiving or apprentice related responsibilities or if I am off due to sickness or annual leave. In terms of completing this task, there are two templates I created (one covering our HS2 sites and another for all other projects) which have the site code, box number, contents, and target humidity already filled out so whoever is doing the check only needs to add the humidity level and whether the silica gel was changed with the option of adding any notes, such as the silica gel is starting to change colour or if that box was not checked for whatever reason (normally if it had been sent for assessment or analysis) – this can be seen in Figure 2. As seen in Figure 1, this task is scheduled for an hour and this is due to the quantity of boxes that need to be checked, as even with the pre-filled template the task is time consuming. This task takes priority over the logging in of finds from site as if any of boxes have relative humidity that is not within the acceptable range for their contents it will create additional tasks for the week that will need to be brought up at the weekly post-excavation team meeting so it can be added to the task list and prioritised in line with the other tasks scheduled for the week. This task is a relatively easy one to ensure it is being carried out correctly as the individual files for each check are named in such a way that it becomes obvious if one has been skipped or missed and are saved in a folder that the whole team has access to.

| MOLA Stansted Environmental Control Check |         |              |                   |                    |                 |       |
|-------------------------------------------|---------|--------------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------------|-------|
| Date:                                     |         |              |                   | Initials:          |                 |       |
| Site Code                                 | Box No. | Material     | Target Humidity % | Current Humidity % | Silica Changed? | Notes |
| 1C18SMABS                                 | 1       | Lead         | <35%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C18MLFTT;<br>1C19SEDTT;<br>1C18SMBTT     | 1       | Iron, Copper | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C18MLFTT                                 | 1       | Iron         | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C18SMATT                                 | 1       | Iron         | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C18SMATT                                 | 2       | Iron         | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C18SMATT                                 | 3       | Iron         | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C18SMATT                                 | 4       | Iron         | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C18SMATT                                 | 5       | Iron         | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C18SMATT                                 | 6       | Iron         | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C18SMATT                                 | 1       | Copper, Lead | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C19STKAR                                 | 1       | Iron         | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C19STKAR                                 | 3       | Iron         | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C19STKAR                                 | 4       | Iron         | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C19STKAR                                 | 5       | Iron         | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C20SFBAR                                 | 1       | Iron         | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C20SFBAR                                 | 2       | Iron         | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C20SFBAR                                 | 3       | Iron         | <20%              |                    |                 |       |
| 1C18BISTT                                 | 1       | Iron         | <20%              |                    |                 |       |

Target humidity: Iron should be 20% or lower; copper alloy and lead should be 35% or lower. Some objects/boxes may require a different humidity, but this will be written on the box.

Figure 2 - The HS2 Environmental Check template

The post-excavation team at Stansted have a weekly meeting (Monday 9am) where we discuss workload, sites starting and ending, priorities and deadlines. This meeting is attended by all post-excavation staff including processors, conservators, supervisors, team leads and the head of the department so that everyone has the same information. This meeting is a vital part of the week as it allows the team to discuss together which tasks will need to be done for that week and whether the deadlines are achievable. The meeting begins with the Team Leader outlining any sites that are starting that week, any sites that are ending that week, any sites where the Project Manager has asked for spot-dating and sites that do or do not have the Project Managers go-ahead for processing yet. Alongside this the post-excavation Supervisor mentions which sites have emailed about the finds and samples they dropped off on the previous Friday and decide which sites should take priority based on several factors including quantity, when they're due off site, whether the Project Manager has given the go-ahead for processing, what type of site it is, and whether the Project Manager believes the client will want a quick turnaround on the report or not. After this the Supervisor allocates tasks to the team. The Supervisor will consider several aspects when assigning tasks. The previous experience of each team member and any areas where they want to get more experience will be considered, for example if someone has a strong finds processing background but wants to get more experience with sample processing or if someone has been doing one task for a long time and would like a change of pace with this being weighed against the requirements for that project like a tight deadline or budget (Tierney 2023; Summerton 2019). When it comes to delegating tasks it is important that they are assigned fairly according to the team members skills, experience, and wishes so as not to cause bad feelings among the team (Laker et al. 2020) and that these decisions are clearly and transparently communicated (Collantes 2021), especially when deciding who should do a task that no one wants to do (Tierney 2023). It was at this meeting that the Fire Safety Training, seen in Figure 1, was brought up. None of the post-excavation team had known about this training session prior to that Monday as it had been organised by a member of the geomatics teams who doubles as the responsible person for facilities and the Health and Safety officer for the Northampton, Chester and Stansted offices (Krawczyk 2023). This was not something that could be re-scheduled as it had already been organised and paid for, so it became necessary for the team to plan around this. This was, obviously, not ideal but is something that we can prevent in the future from better cross-team communication.

As seen in Figure 1, I have two days dedicated to preparing the HS2 archive. During these two days I have to manage the workload of eight evaluations and three large-scale excavations covering several individual areas as well as communicating with various levels of the MOLA archive team and my line manager. As I am not doing this full-time, I start every morning by checking a progress spreadsheet I made to make sure I know where I had gotten to the last time I worked on it. This project does not have a deadline as the Project Manager wanted it done as quickly as possible before the analysis stage programme of works were awarded (Powell, Garner, et al. 2023). However, LP: Archaeology did not have a full archive team (consisting only of one project manager in the Chester office who could only dedicate one day a week to archiving) so the archives (material, digital, and documentary) were not considered at the start of the project so were not properly planned for, and so needed to be bought up to the minimum level required in case a different company won the tender for the analysis stage (Powell, Garner, et al. 2023). I was chosen to deliver this particular task because I had previously helped to prepare archives during my brief time working at Cotswold Archaeology. For this project the priority was given to one of the smaller sites so I could familiarise myself with the MOLA templates and so that my work could be checked against what they were expecting before dedicating myself to the larger sites (Anastasiadou et al. 2023). Once this had been done, I chose to

prioritise work on the three excavations over the smaller evaluation sites as they would require the most work – though after making a solid foothold on the excavations I did switch back to the smaller sites and finished them. When working on the excavations, I chose to delegate the preparation of the environmental side of the archives to another team member who had worked more experience with sample processing than I did and were more familiar in the way LP handled their samples as I had not worked on that team prior to the MOLA takeover where the environmental and finds teams merged. This proved beneficial as both sides of the material archive could be prepared at the same time by the people who were most familiar with their respective contents. Before passing off the task completely I had to show her how the MOLA team had asked for things to be prepared and how the relevant spreadsheets were to be formatted. This project involves a lot of communication between myself and all levels of the MOLA archives team as they need to be aware of the way LP: Archaeology recorded their finds and how we keep track of what is where so they could understand how much of an undertaking this project was. This involved their team visiting our office several times in the lead up and several Microsoft Teams meeting to check on my progress throughout the project.

In conclusion, the success of any project relies on the clear communication between team members whether this be between two low-level employees about who does a specific task that has a blanket assignment to the two of them, or between staff and their managers with which tasks/projects take priority and who should be doing what job each week ensuring that all aspects are considered including skillsets, CPD, routine changes, and the needs of a specific project. It can be difficult to balance these but if done correctly can lead to a happier, more efficient team.

**Total Word Count: 1853****Bibliography:**

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