

Field Journal

A lot of the week leading up to the dig was anxiety filled, although exciting, the idea of spending a week and a half in a new place, felt daunting, I attempted to read up about Llanllŷr but my efforts were rather futile, I just found myself staring at my screen, rereading the same passage with the information totally unable to stick. There was also the issue of food, I can be very particular about meals, and most of the meals I eat require a stove top which we would not have access too. New place, new activity, new people and not even being able to eat the food I like is not my favourite idea, I'm a creature of habit and the upcoming week felt scarily daunting. Logically I knew I would be fine but that didn't help the nagging feeling that I wouldn't deal with it well. But getting out of my comfort zone is something I know I need to get more okay with.

The coach left Carmarthen at 9am, so I set my alarm for 7:30, giving myself more than enough time for my usual morning dallying, although I needn't have bothered. I wake at around 5:45 and just stared at the ceiling till I deemed it an appropriate time to get up. I was ready by 8 and just sat on my bed watching the clock tick past.

Weirdly I've been quite looking forward to the coach ride, I love traveling, staring out the window watching the landscape roll past. I often feel guilt about doing nothing, but traveling is the one time I can just relax and do nothing and they actually isn't anything better for me to be doing.

Lampeter is a really great place, it's small but it's lively enough. Having spent my entire life living on the Somerset levels, the Ceredigion landscape is something very unfamiliar, I feel a lot more like I'm a part of the landscape surrounded by woodland and mountings, it feels contained, unlike back home where the vast flood land shows so much sky, like it could just swallow me up if it so



chooses. Everything here feels like it has its place, there's a balance too it.



LLanllyr is a really beautiful site, it's placed at the bottom of a large valley, there is always wildlife. I spotted both a buzzard and Red-Kite flying overhead and even got to watch a heron land in a neighbouring field when I was supposed to be listening to the introductory briefing.

We picked out groups, but I never felt that I knew many people in my class so was glad to see people drag me aside to join their group, this made me feel slightly better about the whole thing.

Although half of the day was spent in preparing, we worked surprisingly quickly, the first task was to mark out where our 2 by 6-meter trench out. We used Pythagoras to make sure the corners were right angles. I'm glad that the bit of Maths knowledge I swore I would never use in real life got to be used in real life.



Once it was marked out we began de-turfing, and on the second row Megan (a member of my group) shouted that she had found some pottery, and there seemed to be this buzz pass through the group. None of us expected to find anything on the first day, and although pottery wasn't what we were looking for it was very exciting. From then we kept finding stuff. Some finds of personal note were 5 nails, clumps of irons, what looks to be part of a willow pattern plate and a lump of strange blue glass.

We were about halfway de-turfing the trench when Paula (another member of my group) found our first piece of flint, which none of us were expecting, it was this tiny piece about a centimetre in size and orange in colour. I wasn't expecting really for us to find flint at all, let alone on the first day, and I don't think anyone else was either it's a good sign for things to come.



By the second day we had removed all the turf and we began to mattock but quickly told that due to the flint we found yesterday we had to trowl everything by hand, so we had to watch the other groups get to swing about big tools and we were all on our hands and knees toweeling. It was then when I found my first flint, a small piece less than half a centimetre. Only to immediately after find an even smaller piece of flint, it was so tiny and I was so scared that



Photography by Paula Smith

I'd drop it and it would disappear under the earth for another 10,000 years. After they were both safely placed into finds bags I was taught how to log them. We were later taught how to plot cordons, with the X and Y being relatively simple but for the Z we had to use a device called a dumpy level which seemed more complex than it was, it involved holding large rulers at different points in the field, creating a temporary bench mark and pointing a rather complex telescope at it. Regardless it was pretty fun, I used to spend a lot of time going on long walks round small towns looking for benchmarks, I'm pretty fond of them and getting to make my own made me more excited than it should have. I ended the day with finding another piece of flint, this piece much bigger (although I was told it was still a very small piece) which was slightly intimidating as a large number of people were gathering round our trench (trench 23) and I had to perform all that newly learnt paperwork with an audience.

On the third day I felt everything really got into a rhythm, we all knew what we were doing and there was one main goal of finding more flints that everyone was working towards, at this point I'd pulled out about 5 tiny flints, I've yet to figure out if I've got a good eye for it or it's just dumb luck.

I've quite enjoyed chatting with everyone in my trench, I think this is one of the parts of this that I enjoy is that I'm spending a lot of time around people I typically otherwise wouldn't.

One thing I didn't really consider was the wide range of people I would be interacting with. I would consider this my first proper year as an adult, my first year out of school, away from my home and my family, everything has been a learning experience, but one thing that stood out to me was that suddenly I'm interacting with people decades older than myself and I'm not being treated as a child, because I no longer am one. People so much older than me asking me for my opinion on things and treating that opinion as something equal to their own.

It seems strange to mention that among all the technical things I have learnt on the dig one of the things I think I will carry with me forever is this social aspect.

While trying to fall asleep one night I decided my new personal challenge which is to find the smallest flint fragment ever found on the site, it does seem that my best ability is finding teeny tiny little micro fragment.

On fifth night I had a very vivid dream that I was sat trowelling, it's now occupying my subconscious. But perhaps the dream was foreshadowing good things to come as on the following day found my smallest flint yet, at just 2.5 mm, if this isn't the smallest flint fragment ever found on the site I don't know what is.

I'm getting very into it now, I get rather disappointed when I have to get up and eat lunch, even when I'm not finding anything the methodical motions are surprisingly enjoyable.

The looking for tiny rocks mindset is one I'm struggling to get out of it, I used the opportunity to explore parts of Lampeter and found myself sat by the river sifting thought rocking for a good while before actually realising what I was doing.

About halfway through week, another trench started pulling out flint now and it's much larger apieces then what were getting in our trench, which is interesting to see. Everything really feels like teamwork, whenever anyone finds something there's just this buzz in the air and everyone rushes over to the trench to have a look.



We got to have a peak into the mysterious top trenches at last and had it all explained to us; the idea of context has been explained to me but being able to actually see the layers of different dirt in the ground was very interesting. They found a tree stump in the bottom of a bit, and it seemed to have been put there purposefully. The tree had been taken for dendro dated and it came back as being iron age, adding the layers of history on the site. I also got to watch a dendrochronology sample being taken from a tree on the site.



The last ten days were some I'll take with me for the rest of my life, I've gained so much experience both archaeological stuff and more generally. I found 16 flints total!



Photograph by Paula Smith