

THE BIRDS AND THE BEES: AN ARCHAEOLOGIST'S VIEW OF THE OUTSIDE

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The ongoing changes impacting our climate are seen first-hand by many archaeologists. As archaeologists, we are often more closely attuned to the world around us. Our eyes spot things in a different way to others and how we process this information is distinctly 'archaeological'. How we see the world is shaped by our careers and ultimately our passion, whether you are in the field, classroom, lab, museum or storeroom. Since I graduated from Bournemouth University in 2020 I have worked in two commercial organisations alongside research digs. I have noticed one distinct aspect that seems to connect all archaeologists, whatever their calling, whether it is environmental, administrative, post-excavation, illustration, the list is endless. That connection is a **love of the natural world**.

The natural world is something that is incredibly important to every archaeologist I have met. For some, it is of a very rugged importance that involves hiking armed with OS maps, and ends in a pub ten miles away. For others, it is a more easy-going love of the outdoors. They know they like a mild overcast day for photography and that is it. Wildlife is around field archaeologists

every day we are on site. I have met diggers who can listen to a bird at five minutes past eight in the morning and tell you exactly what it is. Other times it is the sadder events of dealing with wildlife, like trapped rabbits or injured deer. Some archaeologists love listening to music and just enjoying the sensations of being outside. I know people based at home or in

an office can tell you more about geology and a local landscape than anyone. As archaeologists we encounter the soil regularly, and whether it is a sandy silt or a clay it is still part of the world outside. In December last year, I had a 50-minute conversation about fungi with someone I work with. I knew nothing of fungi before, and if I am honest I am still a bit confused



Credit: Tabitha Gulliver Lawrence

SUMMER



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AUTUMN



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about them so I won't be foraging any time soon. But listening to my colleague talk so passionately about this countryside wisdom, without the need for jargon and Latin names, showed me once again how distinct this aspect is to so many in our field.

The natural world is an incredible place; the colours, the gravels, the trees, the butterflies, blackberries in late summer, the dark rain clouds, the wind, birds singing. Archaeologists are watching the world change. Those who have worked in archaeology can attest to that. Some sites, once worked, may no longer exist, whether because of flooding, quarrying, erosion or a range of other risks to natural and archaeological environments. Even those who are in their early careers have an acute awareness of our changing environment, as they have explored it in depth at school and grown up with groups such as Extinction Rebellion and figureheads like Greta Thunberg and David Attenborough. This article's theme is broad but it is something I have thought about for a while. We are just as responsible as archaeologists for our environment and, perhaps, we are more responsible than most given our relationship to the world around us. We have a life-long curiosity about the past; how communities lived and thrived and used the landscape around them. We have abundant knowledge of these relationships, and an understanding based on subjects from geology to history to anthropology. We have scientific evidence dating back thousands of years. Ask an archaeologist about a prehistoric community and how they lived and they will tell you about their existence, their homes and their material culture. All of that knowledge links back to the natural world in some way and we as archaeologists can help.



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It is our duty to effectively communicate the use of landscapes, the lives of past communities, and our work as archaeologists to the public **to ensure the present and future sustainability of those same areas for everyone**. Next time you're at a building development and you've just found a nice roundhouse and associated finds, maybe (just maybe) its presence in that environment should have a wider influence than just archaeological. How did they use the surrounding landscape and can those ideas or theories be employed

today? I am certain there are many sites across Europe that have environmental concerns, perhaps affecting the archaeology or perhaps affecting the site's future use. If we have such a love of the natural world, why are we not fighting harder for it? We will lose an integral aspect of our lives and our work if we do nothing. As the natural world changes with alarming speed, the relationship between it and the people will erode with it. We as archaeologists and people must continue our work with this in mind.

Tabitha Gulliver Lawrence

Tabitha is an early careers site assistant working for the Colchester Archaeological Trust in Essex. She is Secretary of the Early Careers SIG, Ordinary Member of the Digger's Forum and volunteers with YAC and the Lithic Studies Society. Her job and volunteer roles are inspired by her love of the past and her desire to get more people into archaeology, especially young people. Her interests include prehistory, museums and public engagement. Outside of work she loves spending time with her friends and trying new ciders (often with deadly consequences).

