

Taryn Bell: BA Archaeology at the University of York

Taryn Bell¹

¹Department of Archaeology, University of York, The King's Manor, York, YO1 7EP

Email: tlb505@york.ac.uk

The last three years have passed by so quickly, and I cannot believe I am writing a piece reflecting on my university experience. I can honestly say without a doubt, that these three years have been the best three years of my life so far. I have made lifelong friends and gained so much more than just a degree.

I came into university as a BA Historical Archaeology student, and will leave as a BA Archaeology graduate with plans to study for an MSc in Early Prehistory – talk about a change in interests! I have been extremely lucky, luckier than most, in that I have loved every minute of my degree. Yes, it has been stressful at times, but it has all been worth it. I have learnt so much from some really excellent lecturers and have gained not just knowledge about archaeology, but an increased passion for the study of the past.

As for the nitty-gritty of the degree itself, I have happened to choose very varied modules, so have learnt about heritage, mummification, historical archaeology, Neanderthals, ancient DNA and more. While some might disapprove of this 'jack of all trades' approach to studying, I feel that it has given me a good basic understanding of a wide range of archaeological areas. Furthermore, studying such a variety of topics has made me more assured of what I want to do after my undergraduate degree is finished.

The most stressful part of my degree – my dissertation – has also taught me a lot too. My dissertation was on the subject of Egyptian heritage, and created object biographies which studied the meanings given to three very important Ancient Egyptian artefacts: the Rosetta Stone, the Nefertiti Bust and the funerary mask of Tutankhamun. It then looked at the heritage themes linking all three artefacts. More than anything, my dissertation really taught me about the fascinating ways in which we can analyse artefacts to tell us more about the people of the past, as well as the different meanings that come to be given to artefacts over time and the lives they 'live'.

I have also taken on a few extra-curricular activities over the past three years – I was a social rep for the Archaeology Society, I have worked in a couple of schools, taken a job in my holidays, volunteered at a local museum and, obviously, worked for *The Post Hole*! York is such an amazing city with a variety of opportunities, and I am glad to say I have taken advantage of many of them! I will be genuinely sad to leave the city.

Now that I have finished my BA (well, almost – at the time of writing this I have one more piece of work to finish!), I plan on taking a year out of university to earn money for my Masters degree. In this time, I hope to gain more volunteering experience, get a job as a teaching assistant and keep learning about archaeology! I absolutely love archaeology so, as I have already said, I am applying to study for an MSc in Early Prehistory to further my love of the subject of prehistory and in particular, Neanderthals.

To anyone reading this who is considering an archaeology degree – do it! It is so much fun and archaeology really gives students the transferable skills that teachers, lecturers and employers are always going on about. I have had an amazing three years and I cannot wait to see what lies ahead.

Obviously, that does not mean I will not miss being Submissions Editor for *The Post Hole*, but I know we are leaving it in very capable hands. Good luck to next year's team!