

From the 19th June to the 20th July 2017 I participated in a placement in Portugal. I was one of eight from England who worked on a Chalcolithic to Bronze Age site known as Castanheiro Do Vento and worked alongside students and lecturers from the University of Porto and University of Coimbra. I found this experience highly rewarding and learnt a great deal on site, in the museum and built fantastic friendships with those I met.

Welcome Pack

Before leaving for Portugal we were presented with a welcome pack. I found this very helpful as it included all the major information needed and all the forms that required signing were presented at once. We only found a few things missing from it, these included further detail on clothing, such as whether we needed steel toe capped boots and whether a professional attire was required for the museum. The phrase book and visitor book were also extremely useful in preparing for the placement as well as when we were in Portugal. We found it very easy to get in contact with Joanne from grampus when we had questions and she replied promptly.

Flights and Transport

Flights and transport to and from Porto and Freixo de Numao was well explained and we found our destination with ease. When we arrived in Freixo de Numao we were made to feel very welcome and were introduced to everyone including Ana who was our host.

Accommodation

We were taken to our accommodation which we all found very comfortable and enjoyed throughout our stay. The food presented was typically Portuguese and therefore you had to be open minded about trying new things, which we all did, and found new dishes that we enjoyed. Food was plentiful, however, there was a shop nearby where we could buy snacks and on the weekend we were taken to the supermarket for supplies. There was good entertainment space both inside and out and this is where we found ourselves spending the majority of our evenings and getting to know the Portuguese students.

Site

The site was located on top of a large hill and we got there via a mini bus. In the first week we were given a tour of the site, told the aims of this year's project, the rules on site, places we could go if we needed shelter from the heat, material we may find, insects found and the equipment required. Once all this was completed, we started trowling back clearing the excavation area of plants, weeds and leaves. In doing this we were already finding pieces of pottery, including myself, and after a while we easily recognised the colour, consistency and patterns of the pottery found on site.



In the following few weeks we were shown how the site was going to be excavated. The site was split into 2x2m grids and people were moved around to ensure we worked on different

aspects of the site such as within the bastion, the bastion wall, structures or the area outside the bastion. Additionally, some grids just required cleaning back, some required a shallow layer removing and others needed to be excavated a little deeper. I found this idea worked well as it gave everyone an equal chance to experience different parts of the site and no one got bored. At first I was very hesitant when working with the stone as I did not want to remove stones that were archaeological; however, after periods of time, I was able to recognise what stones were archaeological and which were parts of the geology. To understand the stones I had to fully understand the site, location of structures, what angle of stones meant (for example tilted stones in a circular pattern indicates a post hole) and I was taught how if a stone was loose it was part of the geology. I was also assured that if I made a mistake it was not catastrophic as at each stage of excavation, the stones were photographed and recorded. I also found working with the soil hard as when it was hot, it became dusty and areas cleaned were usually covered in dust again. In response to this we were taught that in every excavation, make sure you are aware of your surroundings, which areas nearby have been cleaned, who is working beside you, what direction the wind is coming from and the slope of the land to help you decide which direction to work in. I will now use these considerations in future excavations. On site we were also taught the construction methods used by those who built the settlement. We were told how they used stone, daub and timber, however, in times when material ran low, household objects such as saddle querns were used within the walling. In knowing this information I could understand what I was finding a lot better. We were also made aware of the shape of the structures, scale and orientation. This information helped me identify a new circular structure near the end of the project. I must also add that the hosts asked us a lot of questions and asked about our opinion which I found fantastic! As it made you think about what you were doing, how it fit into the overall site and how things were constructed and made. It also meant we had to be engaged in what was going on within and around your grid as you could be asked anything at any minute. It also gave me the confidence to speak out loud about my ideas as if we got anything wrong it was not made fun of.

In terms of finds, a lot was found over the three weeks. There was a vast amount of pottery that mainly had decoration on them.

There was also a lot of animal bone, daub, saddle querns, hammer stones, whetstones, arrowheads and two copper blades. One of the students found a complete pot which was amazing! And great to see.

During my time on site I found a lot of burnt daub, pottery, hammer stones, charcoal, cup marks, animal bone and one of the copper blades. I was taught how they were made, used and the tell tale signs of them being used. This information will now be transferred to other digs with similar tools.

On site we were also taught how to carry out plan drawings and we each had a turn sieving. These are two of the many key skills I'll



be taking away from the dig. We were given detailed explanations on why such processes are needed and the pros and cons of them.

Museum

When we were first taken to the museum we were shown how finds were archived as well as the finds from previous years at Castanheiro Do Vento. This was highly useful for when we were on site as we could identify finds easier. At the museum we washed finds as well as create inventories for 2017's material. I have done limited museum work before and through taking part in this placement I found that I prefer excavating and being on site rather than in the museum. Though I found myself thinking like this, I am very happy that I took part in the museum work as now I have a better idea of what career path I want to follow.



Evenings and Weekends

In the evenings and on the weekends we had free time. I enjoyed spending time in the village (especially the bakery) and I loved the excursions our host Ana and lecturer João took on us. These included a trip to the village museum, Castelo Velho (A site similar to the one we were working on), Prazo (A Roman site), a castle, swimming in the River Douro and to see the Côa Valley Prehistoric rock art. All were amazing experiences; however, the Côa Valley rock art was magical! We viewed the art at night and our guide was amazing. Not only was the rock art breathtaking but it was the perfect spot to view the stars. I learnt so much about the sites and the contrasts and similarities between the same period in Portugal and the UK. Additionally, on Sundays we went to the swimming pool which was a great way to relax at the end of a working week.



Overall I had an amazing experience and would recommend anyone to carry out one of the placements Grampus has to offer. It is a fantastic opportunity, not only to dig abroad, but to learn about different cultures both past and present, experience the way archaeology is carried out outside the UK, and you meet many amazing people who end up becoming fantastic friends.

