

CONSERVATION OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL METAL ASSEMBLAGE

June 29, 2012 Emily Noel-Paton Conservation, Day of Archaeology 2012, Finds Alan Braby, Archaeology, Artifact, Excavation, freelance illustrator, http, Humanities, Loanhead, London, Midlothian, Museum of London, Science, Scotland

I am an objects conservator at AOC Archaeology group, a commercial archaeology company based in Loanhead, Midlothian, Scotland. There are only two of us in the department so we are kept very busy and are involved in all sorts of projects with every day being completely different. We conserve and stabilise all the finds that our archaeologists in the field excavate. Often we are the first non-archaeologists to deal with freshly excavated materials and we are constantly ensuring that the materials gain their archaeological potential.

At the moment I am conserving a large number of finds from two sites excavated by our London office. The purpose of the conservation is to stabilise the finds for the long-term archive as well as possibly reveal new details on the surface of the objects, helping the specialists identify and describe the finds. The finds are all metal – iron, lead and copper alloy with a large number of Roman coins and many coffin nails.

All the artefacts were covered in thick layers of soil and corrosion obscuring the surfaces and masking any detail. Following x-raying of the finds, I cleaned the iron artefacts using an air abrasive machine and the copper alloy items using mechanical methods (scalpel, bamboo skewer) carefully under a binocular microscope.



Me cleaning a copper alloy spoon under the microscope



Roman coin after conservation

This morning I have been finishing the last few objects and taking after treatment photographs. This afternoon I will be documenting the treatment of each object. As the objects were excavated in London we have to follow a specific documentation procedure set by the Museum of London. Each object has a A5 proforma card with specific information about the find, its condition and how it was treated.

While I have been working in the lab Alan Braby a freelance illustrator has come in to do a recorded drawing of one of the amazing Roman altars that we have been conserving recently. If you would like to find out more we set up a blog about the conservation work we have done on these two Roman altars excavated at Lewisvale Park. Here is the link: <http://www.aocarchaeology.com/lewisvale-roman-altars/>