

CHARITY BEGINS...

July 29, 2011 Ralph Mills Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2011, Finds, Post Medieval Ann Insker, Archaeology, Britain, Castle Gate, Excavation, Nottingham, Nottingham Museum, United Kingdom

I spent yesterday searching through boxes (musty cardboard “bone boxes” very familiar to UK archaeologists) in Nottingham Museum’s storage room (many thanks to Ann Insker), looking for C19th mass-produced miniatures. I found just one example (which might be earlier than the C19th, although the accompanying ceramics were certainly from the first half of that century) which was better than none! Indeed I found very little C19th material compared with medieval and Roman, which probably reflects the cavalier attitude of many/most archaeologists in the past (myself included) to all that rubbish in the “overburden” which was almost always either removed by machine or chucked in a big bag labelled “unstratified.”

I’ve lived to regret that, as now I study and research the very material we then ignored, and often perhaps still undervalue in the UK, especially as I see how important it is to archaeologists outside Britain, where a single clay pipe stem or sherd of transfer-printed pottery, things I rootled through by the score in unlabelled bags in the museum, can be of tremendous archaeological value.

So today I’ve begun to research my single discovery, an unglazed miniature of three figures labelled “CHARITY” (see below). Not Faith, Hope and Charity, unless those words were on the now lost upper part of the ceramic. The central figure appears to be male. It was excavated in 1966 from a pit on the north side of Newdigate House, Castle Gate, Nottingham, now a posh restaurant but important as the place where the growing of celery in England was apparently first promoted. That’s all I know at present...

