



# WHY I LOVE POT

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Hello, this is Alice Forward, PhD student at Cardiff, wrapping up the Cosmeston Archaeology contributions for Day of Archaeology 2011. We have had three excellent blogs today; Nicolle who [started the day](#) with photo scanning, Louise at lunchtime discussed [how she was lured to archaeology by medieval dreams](#), and afternoon tea with [Kyle](#), a Cosmeston old timer who is particularly familiar with the 2010 season of excavation. These three are part of a group of six students undertaking a post-excavation course on the material from Cosmeston. We will be bringing you blogs from each (Stuart, Sarah and Beth) over the next three weeks on our Cosmeston archaeology blog, so please [check us out!](#)

Post-excavation generally places archaeologists into two camps. Those who secretly enjoy organising things and those who are likely to start taking holiday time in order to avoid those rainy pot washing days. I most definitely fall into the former of these, but it isn't the cataloguing that gets me going! Post-excavation enables you to directly engage with the archaeological record and analytical process. As Kyle said you understand so much more when you begin to bring it all together.

This week has involved initial work with the paper archive and, as all the finds had been washed and bagged on site, we moved straight to marking and sorting the pottery. The key principle for marking pottery is that it should be resilient but reversible, so that if necessary it can be removed. In order to achieve this we use Paraloid B72 (a non-yellowing acrylic resin) mixed with acetone (20% weight to volume). A thin band of this is painted on the object and, after it has dried, the site code and context number is written on

in black ink. When the ink has dried a second layer of Paraloid is applied to seal the information. This can be removed without damaging the object using a cotton swab and 100% acetone (for more information see [Collections Link](#)).

As Louise also mentioned, marking pottery is necessary for a number of reasons. Firstly, boxes get dropped, mice can chew through plastic bags and plastic bags degrade. With pottery all marked up, there is no danger of losing context, enabling future generations to study assemblages. Secondly, particularly with pottery, interpretation of contexts can be helped if it is clear that parts of one vessel were deposited within a number of different features. To keep a record of this, and to enable reconstruction of the pot, you need to be able to know specifically where the sherds came from.

### **Sherd Nerd**



*Alice Loves Pot 4 eva*

Why do I have such a fascination and love of pottery?! I first began to find it particularly interesting when I was excavating in Leicester city centre on the [High Cross development](#). The work there was bringing up massive amounts of ceramic material and I was particularly frustrated that I couldn't identify the sherds (other than what was medieval and what was Roman). This lack of knowledge cultivated a desire to be able to know my way around a ceramic assemblage. I was lucky enough at ULAS to have a supportive manager, [Nick Cooper](#), who began my formal training. Since starting the PhD at Cardiff University I have developed a good knowledge of South Welsh pottery. This saved me this week, as people were tired of just marking random bits of pottery, but once they were able to recognise what they were marking the job became far more interesting.

Reading the last paragraph back has slightly surprised me and made me realise how exciting my life must seem...