

# WHAT IS IN THE POST?

June 29, 2012 Tim Young Commercial Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2012, Medieval, Science Archaeometallurgy, Assemblage, Bellows, Blacksmith, Ceramic, Christmas, individual site, Ireland, Manufacturing, Materials science, medieval site, Meta, Plastic arts, Slag, Steelmaking, Tuyere

One of the delights of specialist post-ex work is that you never know quite what the next delivery from the postman or courier will bring. Today's delivery was of 15 crates of iron-working residue (almost quarter of a tonne!) from a medieval site in Ireland.

A quick look (its a bit like Christmas...!) shows a beautifully-preserved assemblage of slag and large fragments of tuyères (the ceramic 'nozzle' carrying the blast from the bellows into the blacksmith's hearth).

Reporting on an assemblage like this is not simply a job of putting labels on items, rather its a process of real research. None of the processes and techniques which produced these residues is fully understood. Each assemblage adds a small piece to the big picture of the development of metalworking, not just to the understanding of the individual site and its economic context.



However, curiosity has to be curbed, for now. This collection joins the queue of material to be studied in coming weeks; today's tasks are very different. They belong to the other end of the investigation process: the interpretation and reporting on detailed analytical data – but more of that later...