

RUTH TAYLOR: SENIOR ARCHAEOLOGIST AND ACCIDENTAL IMPEDER OF BE- SUITED CITY FOLK

June 29, 2012 MOLA Commercial Archaeology, Day of Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2012, Medieval archaeologist, Archaeology, biscuits, Boot, Footwear, left site, London, Metal detector, mud, Ruth Taylor, Senior Archaeologist, steel-toe capped boots, urban archaeology

8am. I found myself on a building site, in a dank basement peering down a 2m deep hole, wielding both a torch and a hand tape as I valiantly attempted to record a late medieval barrel-lined well and a medieval quarry pit that were visible in section. This was challenging to say the least as I wasn't about to enter a deep, unshored foundation trench – safety first! In addition to my usual hard hat, safety boots and gloves, I was also wearing ear defenders and a dust mask, as they were breaking out concrete nearby; all you could see of my face were my eyes. A few snaps for the archaeological record later and I could be found slowly sinking into the spoil heap waving a metal detector around, listening for the beep that would indicate a potentially exciting small find. Unfortunately, all I seemed to detect today were the iron girders supporting the existing building. I did my best to wipe off the mud caking my steel-toe capped boots, but still felt guilty once I had climbed out of the basement and seen that the site cleaner had just finished vacuuming the construction site office.



Hazards of archaeology #725: muddy boots; Hazards of archaeology #726 leaving muddy bootprints

I left site at 9.30am and caught a bus to the office. I've never managed to travel light as an archaeologist, but today I felt like a packhorse as I carted: my rucksack, the site records, camera, half-metre scale and metal detector to the bus stop. If you were walking through the City of London this morning and were almost taken out by an over-laden, slightly disheveled individual with hard-hat hair wearing a grubby pair of jeans – I can only apologise.

Present time. After a cup of tea and a catch-up (ok, ok – gossip) with my colleagues, I've settled down to write this post before starting work on a geotechnical watching brief report for a site I finished a few weeks ago. As thrilling as that sounds, I may need some chocolate biscuits for motivation. Does anyone want anything from the Co-op?