

SEACITY MUSEUM: ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING

June 29, 2012 Charlotte Dixon Anglo-Saxon, Day of Archaeology 2012, Maritime Archaeology, Museum Archaeology, Roman Archaeology, Europe, Hoard, maritime archaeology, metal, museum, Museums, Sea City Museum, southampton, the Heritage, The Museum

Today I have been doing environmental monitoring of archaeological collections on display at the new SeaCity Museum (opened in April this year). I was lucky enough to start a new job last week as Collections Care and Access Trainee for Southampton City Council Museum Collection Management, funded by the Heritage Lottery Skills for the Future scheme. So far I have had some fantastic opportunities to learn about collections and documentation and today we are focused on environmental monitoring to ensure the objects' conditions are stable.

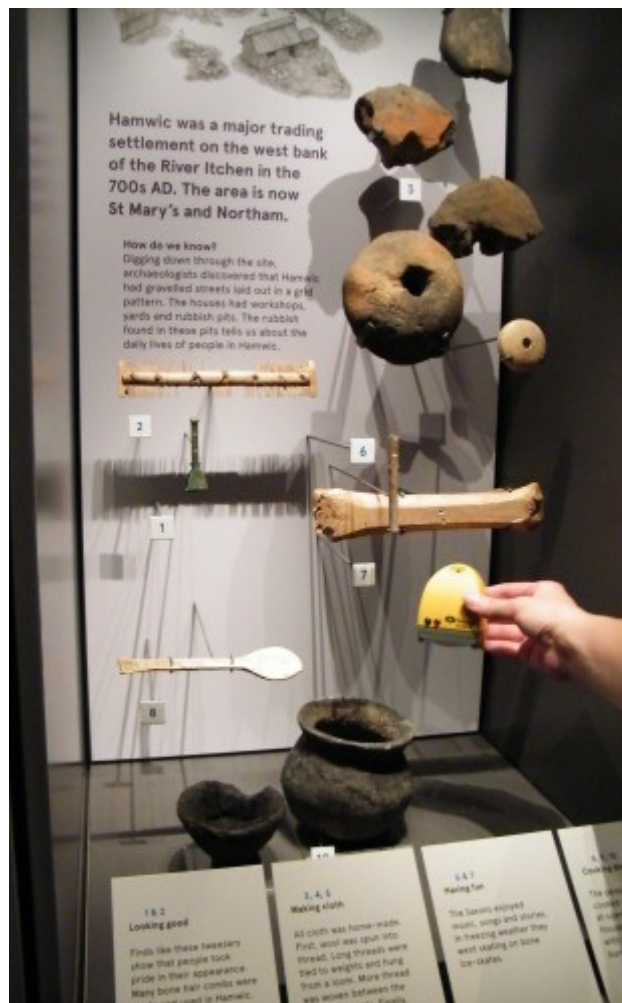


Tiny Tag in the Millbrook Roman Hoard display case

The museum houses a range of objects related to Southampton's past which includes this fantastic hoard of Roman coins excavated in Millbrook, Southampton. Over 4,000 late 3rd century Roman coins were found during building work. 1,000 of these coins have been put on display for the public to view at SeaCity Museum. The coins are copper alloy and need to be monitored to preserve them in as good a state as possible. To achieve this Tiny Tags were put in cases with vulnerable objects to record temperature and humidity readings at regular intervals on a daily basis.

Next job is to download the information to create graphs and interpret if the levels are right for that particular case. These Tiny Tags can record and store data for three months so the data is logged and the Tiny Tags reset at a minimum of every three months.

Another display case for monitoring is the settlement in Hamwic case. This consists of loom weights, a cooking pot, lamp, spindle whorl, linen smoother, bone comb, whistle, ice skate and tweezers. It is important to monitor this case to keep the bone and metal in the appropriate conditions to prevent the objects from deteriorating.



Putting a Tiny Tag into the Hamwic display case

Hamwic was a Middle Saxon (c.700-850) town situated around what is now Northam and St Marys in modern Southampton. It was an important port and excavations show that many crafts and industries were practiced in Hamwic. The excavations at Hamwic have resulted in one of the best collections of Middle Saxon finds in Europe so I feel privileged to work so closely with such exciting finds!

I have a background in archaeology with a BA in History and Archaeology and a Masters in Maritime Archaeology so it has been a very interesting day learning about monitoring conditions for objects post excavation and the dimensions and concerns about displaying objects, and that has been my day of archaeology. Not all archaeological work is in the field!

Now it's back to learning about documentation and recording and exploring more interesting objects.

If you are interested in seeing the above mentioned objects for yourself then please visit the [SeaCity Museum](#) website.