

# MICHAEL MARSHALL: ASSESSING SMALL FINDS FROM ROMAN LONDON

June 29, 2012 MOLA Commercial Archaeology, Day of Archaeology 2012, Roman Assemblage, BBC, Contemporary art, glass, glass working, iron nails, Michael Marshall, Music groups, Nail, Nine Inch Nails, post-ex, Scotland, small finds

Like any job in archaeology, working with small finds can be a bit of a mixed bag. For every box opened to reveal shiny ‘treasure’ there are countless others containing more prosaic yet interesting finds which are indicative of everyday life and activities in the past. These are really the ‘best bit’ of any assemblage but more numerous still on many urban sites are boxes full of highly fragmentary and corroded ‘dross’. Some of this is completely unidentifiable, fairly undiagnostic (such as fragments of iron sheet or wire) or else tantalisingly close to being a recognisable object leading to some speculative flicking through likely find’s books or trips around the office to bother colleagues.

Today I am working on a post-excavation assessment report for an interesting Roman site in Southwark and it is no exception. This morning I’ll be dealing with some more of the most corroded horrible bulk nails it’s ever been my misfortune to handle (don’t expect any terribly enlightening updates about these) but this afternoon I have some more nice Roman glass to round off the week so stick with me. There are lovely glass vessels in this assemblage and some evidence for glass working – probably the first evidence of this sort from south of the river.

In the meantime I’m off to grab some gloves and some more boxes of nails. At least it’s a bit cooler today. I grew up in Scotland and so anything above about 24°C is a bit on the warm side for me and it was horrible yesterday when it topped 31 degrees in the office. I was wearing gloves and a dust mask and had to close the windows and turn off the fan in my section of the office to

stop all the dust, rust and muck from the nails choking the osteologists and finds specialists I share a room with. For the present here's a photo of my rather generic desk in that room to contrast with all the lovely site photos that I'm seeing appearing on the website already. This is 'where the magic happens'... or something like that. The sharp-eyed will notice the awesome (free and pretty accurate) BBC prehistory timeline above my computer.



*Where the magic happens*