

SIMON DAVIS: A SNAP-SHOT OF 18TH-CENTURY DAILY LIFE

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Andrew, Archaeology, British Museum, broken metal candlestick, Cess, Cess pit,
Cesspit, Delftware, domestic, Finds, London, pottery, Simon Davis, Toilets

Today is the final day of excavation here on our site in the City where we've been digging inside a series of twelve tiny early 20th century coal vaults. We've been working in these for the last fourteen weeks and with two archaeologists in each vault friendship is certainly a bonus!

Archaeological survival beneath each vault floor has been quite deep (up to 3m in places). Some of the most exciting finds this week were discovered within a deep brick-built cess-pit that had been filled up with a wide range of domestic finds that probably came from the kitchen, the domestic quarters or even straight off the dining table (see photo). The pit had been reused as a rubbish dump in the 18th century and was full of general household detritus, these include a broken metal candlestick (pictured), several glass bottles, a small (possibly delftware) bowl (pictured) that looks like it could have been used as a table item to serve sugar or butter. Several other small fineware vessels including tea cups and egg cups (pictured) were also kept. Two very fine worked bone objects including a dress comb were also collected and two clay pipes were recovered with the bowl and almost the entire stem intact (pictured). The assemblage is exactly the type of thing that archaeologists want to find, as such common items paint an immediate picture of working households; a snap-shot of daily life for the relatively well-off middle classes of 18th century London.



Andrew up to his elbows in an 18th century brick-lined cess pit

Special thanks also to Andrew Cochrane (pictured) who is leaving today to take on a new role at the British Museum; his hard work on site over the last 14 months has been greatly appreciated. Many thanks and best of luck!