

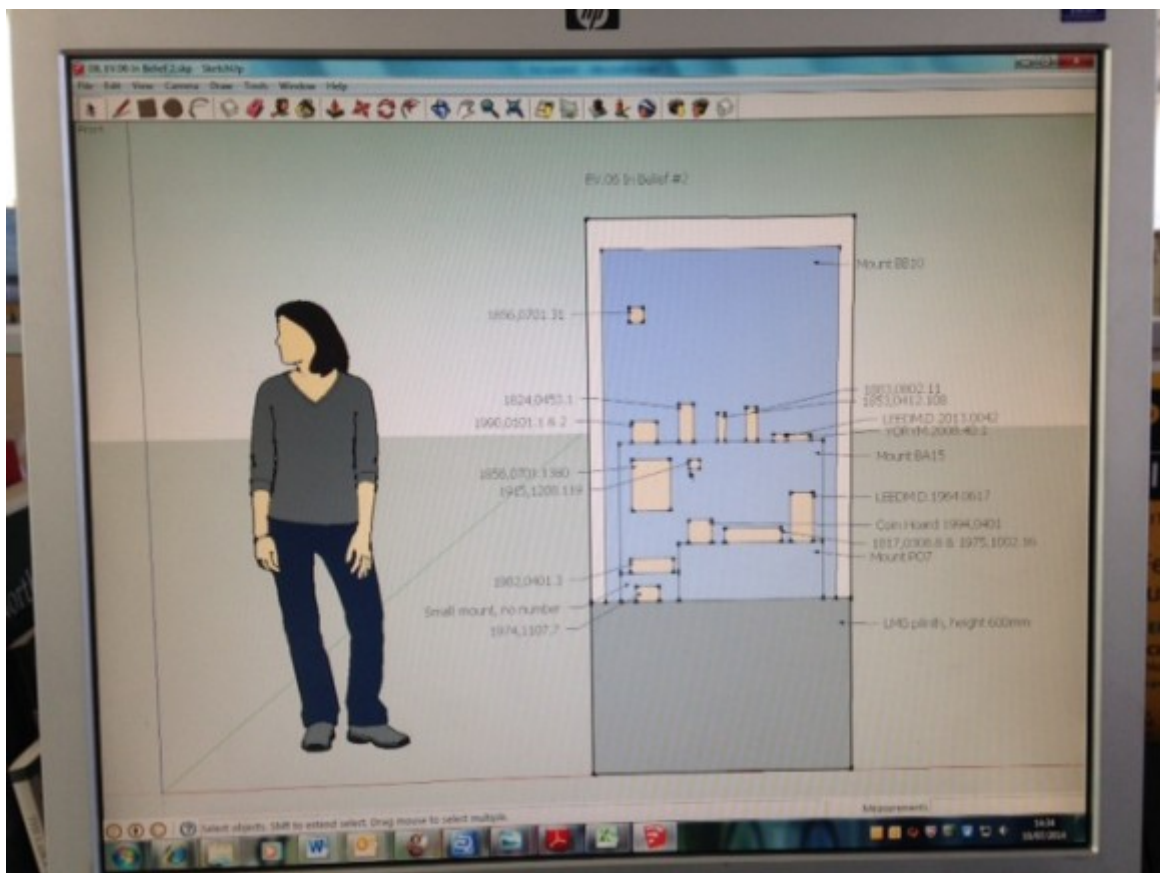
PLANNING FOR THE ROMAN INVASION OF LEEDS

July 11, 2014 Katherine Baxter Curation, Day of Archaeology 2014, Finds, Historical Archaeology, Military, Museum Archaeology, Roman, Romano-British

Hi, I'm Kat Baxter, Curator of Archaeology for Leeds Museums and Galleries. I'm always thankful that I have a really varied job, and the Day of Archaeology 2014 has fallen on a day when I'm up to my ears in exhibition planning. On 20th September this year the British Museum exhibition 'Roman Empire: Power and People' will open at Leeds City Museum. Over 160 objects from the British Museum collections, as well as loans from The Yorkshire Museum, will arrive on site in less than 2 months (gulp!), as well as graphics, set dressing, and interactives. We will also be integrating our own collections into the displays, and adding our own touches. So right now it's all about planning, planning, planning.

Every case in the exhibition has to be mapped out in advance. Which objects will be displayed in each case? Will they fit, physically and thematically? What display height will be most accessible for visitors? What mounts will we need to make? What fabric / paint can we use? How many labels will we need and how big will they have to be? What about security? What about lighting? What about colour scheme? The list goes on and on.

I'm using Google Sketch-up to design each case so right now my computer screen looks like this:



A screenshot from Google Sketchup

I'm only drawing case layouts in 2D (but I do check the depth of objects), and yes I'm only drawing rectangles to represent maximum height and width of objects and plinths (I don't get too technical), but it reassures me that everything will fit and gives me a chance to alter things that don't work. When the objects arrive at Leeds City Museum in September I'll be clinging to these drawings and praying that all my dimensions are correct!

Even though I'm working on something specific today, there really isn't a 'typical day' being the archaeology curator at Leeds Museums and Galleries. Take my desk for instance – right now it looks like this (it's not normally this untidy):



It's not normally this messy!

What's on my desk in a messy heap is mostly paperwork linked to the Roman Empire exhibition (exhibition layouts, object lists, marketing templates, etc), but also paperwork linked to a whole range of other projects going on at the same time. If the Day of Archaeology was tomorrow I would be running a family event using human remains to uncover clues to the past. If it was yesterday you would have found me in the stores finding objects to take to the conservation lab for future display. If it was last Friday I would have been down in London at UCL for a 'Society for Museum Archaeology' committee meeting.

Every day is completely different, and that's probably why I've been doing this job for 9 years and I still love it.

Kat Baxter, Curator of Archaeology, Leeds Museums and Galleries