

HOW TO PROCESS FINDS

Finds should be cleaned, recorded and put into labelled finds trays to dry. **PLEASE be careful not to mix up the finds from different Test Pits and Spits.**

A waterproof label or labelled bag **MUST** be kept with the finds at every stage of washing and drying. This **MUST** contain the following information:

- Site Code
- Test Pit Number
- Spit Number

Site Code #####

Test Pit #

Spit #

Equipment

- Washing up bowl
- Toothbrush
- Wooden cocktail stick/skewer
- Newspaper
- Seed trays
- Finds bags
- Waterproof labels
- Permanent marker

Washing

Most finds can be washed and left to dry in the finds trays on site. Non-fragile pieces of pottery, bone or stone should be gently washed with clean water and a toothbrush.

- Avoid hard scrubbing of finds as this can cause damage. Don't forget to wash the edges as well as the front and back of finds such as pottery sherds.
- If the water gets too dirty, replace it with clean water (as a rough guide, if you cannot see down 5cm the water needs changing!).
- **DON'T** dunk large finds like bricks and tiles into the washing water as they will soak it up and take longer to dry.
- Finds with a lot of soil sticking to them should first be scraped with a plastic or wooden implement (**never use a metal implement for scraping**).

Fragile finds should never be washed. Keep an eye out for paint on stonework or wall plaster and also for Early Anglo-Saxon and prehistoric pottery (this usually looks like old biscuit or dried mud!). These can be damaged by washing. Instead, carefully remove excess soil with a dry toothbrush and allow to dry. **DO NOT** wash metal or organic finds.

Use the guidelines on page 2 for what to wash and what not to wash.

Drying

Once washed, drain the finds on clean newspaper before placing in a newspaper lined seed tray for drying. If it isn't raining, place the trays outside so that the finds dry quicker.

- Large finds like bricks and tiles will dry more quickly if propped up or stood on end.
- Once the finds are dry, they can be placed into a clearly labelled finds bag.

Guidelines for post-excavation treatment and storage of finds

Material	Corrosion	Treatment	Storage
Antler	-	Wash	Dry
Basket/wicker	-	Do not clean	Damp
Bone (animal)	-	Wash	Dry
Bone (human)	-	Wash	Dry
Copper	Green corrosion	Do not clean	Dry
Ceramic	-	Wash	Dry
Fibre	-	Do not clean	Wet
Flint artefacts	-	Wash with fingers/sponge	Dry
Flint (burnt)	Stable	Wash	Dry
Flint (burnt)	Breaking up	Dry Brush	Dry
Glass (stable)	-	Wash	Dry
Glass (medieval or otherwise unstable)	Flaking badly, possibly opaque	Do not clean	Wet
Gold	-	Wash	Dry
Flaking gilding	-	Do not clean	Contact conservation lab
Horn	Laminates	Wash gently	Wet
Iron	Magnetic attraction, brown or sometimes blue corrosion products	Do not clean	Desiccated after initial drying unless nails
Iron slag	Vesicular	Do not clean	Dry
Ivory	Criss-cross lines	Do not clean	Wet
Jet	Black, shiny, resembles plastic	Wash gently	Wet
Lead/pewter	Heavy, grey/white corrosion	Do not wash	Desiccated after initial drying
Leather	-	Wash gently with fingers/sponge	Wet
Plaster (painted wall)	-	Damp sponge, do not immerse in water	Dry
Resin (amber)	-	Do not clean	Wet
Shale	Grey or black, laminates	Wash gently	Wet
Shell (discard unless from significant dump)	-	Wash gently with fingers	Dry
Silver	Black/mauve corrosion	Do not clean	Dry
Stone (except shale or gilded)	-	Dry brush or wash	Dry
Wood	-	Wash gently with fingers/sponge	Wet