

British Museum  
Roman Britain  
Room 49







Peru  
a journey  
in time  
11 November 2021 -  
29 February 2022



Hokusai  
The Great  
Picture  
Book of  
Everything

Peru  
a journey  
in time

Get  
closer as  
a Member

Hokusai  
The G  
Pictur  
Book  
Every

Service desk area with a curved counter, computer monitors, and informational displays. One display shows "OPEN HOURS AND ACCESS" with times "10:00 - 18:00".



Exhibition display area with various panels and information.



Room  
49

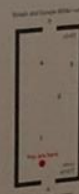
*The Weston Gallery*

## Roman Britain

*AD43–about 411*



The Roman Emperor Claudius invaded Britain in AD 43. By AD 100, England and Wales and some of Scotland had been conquered. The Romans built towns, roads and villas. Latin became the official language and Roman law and money were introduced. A 'Romano-British' culture developed as new settlers from across the empire mixed with the local population. The province collapsed in the early 5th century as continental peoples from beyond the frontiers invaded.



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AD 43–about 411



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1. Mildenhall treasure



2. Head of Hadrian

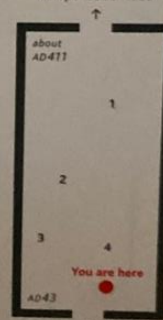


3. Tomb of Constantianus



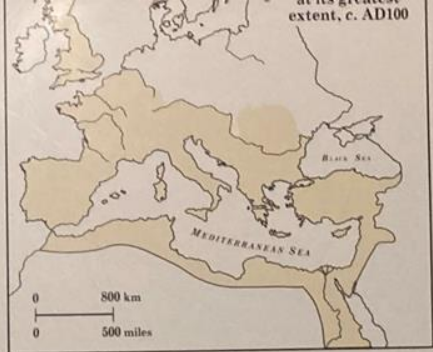
4. Vindolanda tablets

Europe AD 300–1100



Britain and Europe, 2000 BC–AD 43

extent, c. AD100



ATLANTIC OCEAN

NORTH SEA

- London
- Colonia
- Civitas capital
- Other town
- Other site
- ▲ Saxon shore fort
- Legionary fortress
- } Fort

120 km

# ROMAN BRITAIN THE NATURE OF THE EVIDENCE

Britain first entered written history in the Roman period, and surviving ancient texts in Greek and Latin have provided a framework of dates, events and personal names which has been familiar to scholars for centuries. Yet written sources are very biased and incomplete. For example, information which contemporaries regarded as familiar or mundane was not recorded. Published accounts were invariably written from the Roman perspective, never from that of the native population.

Our enhanced understanding of this important period of history in the 20th century is due to the development of archaeology, which provides information that complements, modifies and augments the written accounts. Though archaeological evidence is also imperfect, it is very different from written history and tells us more about ordinary people and everyday life. New archaeological discoveries and methods continue to emerge and add to the data, so that our picture of Roman Britain is a changing and evolving one.







### Building inscription

AD 128-38

Moresby, Cumbria

This inscription was found at the fort of Moresby, near the east gate, above which it probably stood. The title *pater patriae* ('Father of his Country') that Hadrian took in AD 128 dates the inscription between that year and the end of his reign. The Moresby fort was part of the defensive system that extended Hadrian's Wall down the west coast of Cumbria. The inscription may be translated: '(This work) of the Emperor Caesar Trajan Hadrian Augustus, father of his country, the Twentieth Legion Valeria Victrix (built).'

PRB P1970.1-2.2



**Altar, with Greek inscription**  
3rd century AD  
Corbridge, Northumberland

The altar was one of a pair with Greek inscriptions found at the Roman military base. Its short Greek verse is a rare record of a priestess of an eastern cult in Britain. On the sides are a wreath and ox skull with sacrificial knife. The altar has suffered later damage to its top and base. The inscription may be translated: 'To Heracles of Tyre Diodora the priestess (set this up).'

Given by His Grace the Duke of Northumberland  
PRB 1774.7-15.1

cription.  
...  
... was found in the fort of  
... the most gods, those which it  
... The title *pater patriae* ('Father  
...') that Hadrian took in AD 128  
... inscription between that year and  
... of his reign. The Mosaic Art was  
... the decorative system that extended  
... Well down the east coast of  
... Britain. This inscription may be translated  
... as work of the Emperor Caesar Trajan  
... albanus Augustus, Saturn of this country, the  
... western Legion Victoria Victoria (British  
... 1774.7-15.1

PLEASE DO NOT TOUCH  
This altar was found in the fort of  
Corbridge, Northumberland, in  
Northumberland, in 1774.

Altar, with Greek inscription  
3rd century AD  
Corbridge, Northumberland  
The altar was one of a pair with Greek  
inscriptions found at the Roman military  
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altar was found in the fort of  
Corbridge, Northumberland, in  
1774.



**Altar of red sandstone**  
2nd century AD  
Watergate Street, Chester

Found in 1779 within the legionary fortress, the altar was dedicated to the deities Fortuna Redux, Aesculapius and Salus, by the freedmen and slave household of a commander (*legatus*) of the XXth legion, at Chester, probably about AD 100. This man, with the longest name in Roman Britain, may have been a friend of the younger Pliny. The sculpture on the sides of the altar includes attributes of the deities, including the staff of the healing god Aesculapius and Fortuna's rudder.

The inscription may be translated: 'To Fortune the Home-Bringer, to Aesculapius, and to Salus the freedmen and slave-household of Titus Pomponius Mamilianus Rufus Antistianus Funisulanus Vettonianus, son of Titus, of the Galerian voting-tribe, imperial legate, gave and dedicated this.'

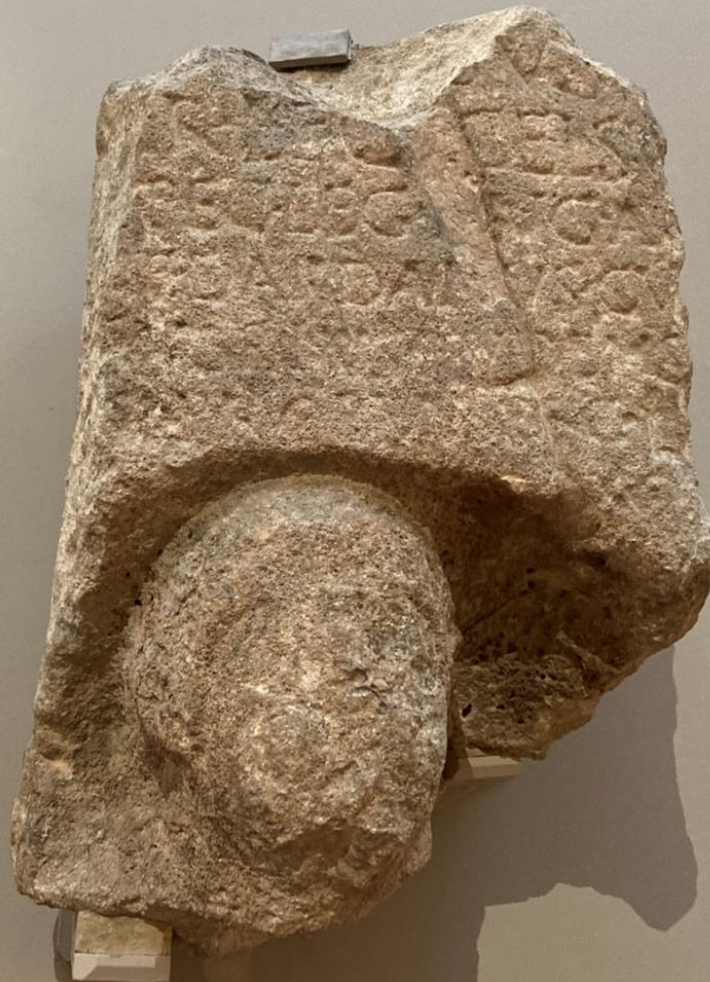
Given by Sir Philip Malpas de Grey Egerton  
PRB 1836 8-5.1

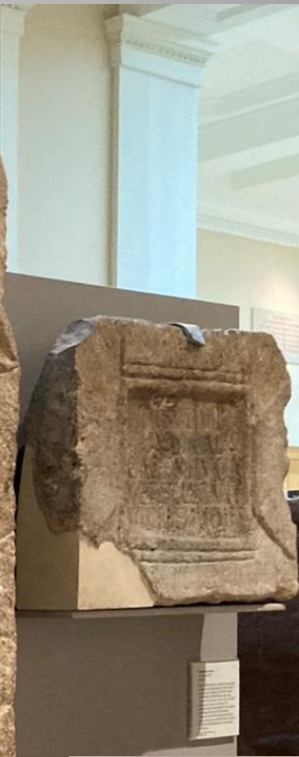
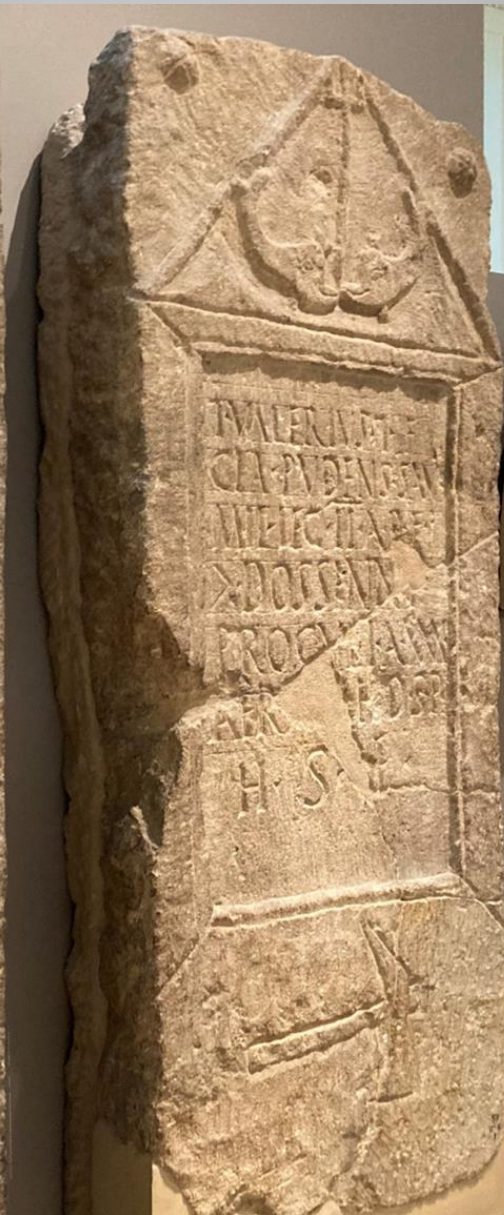
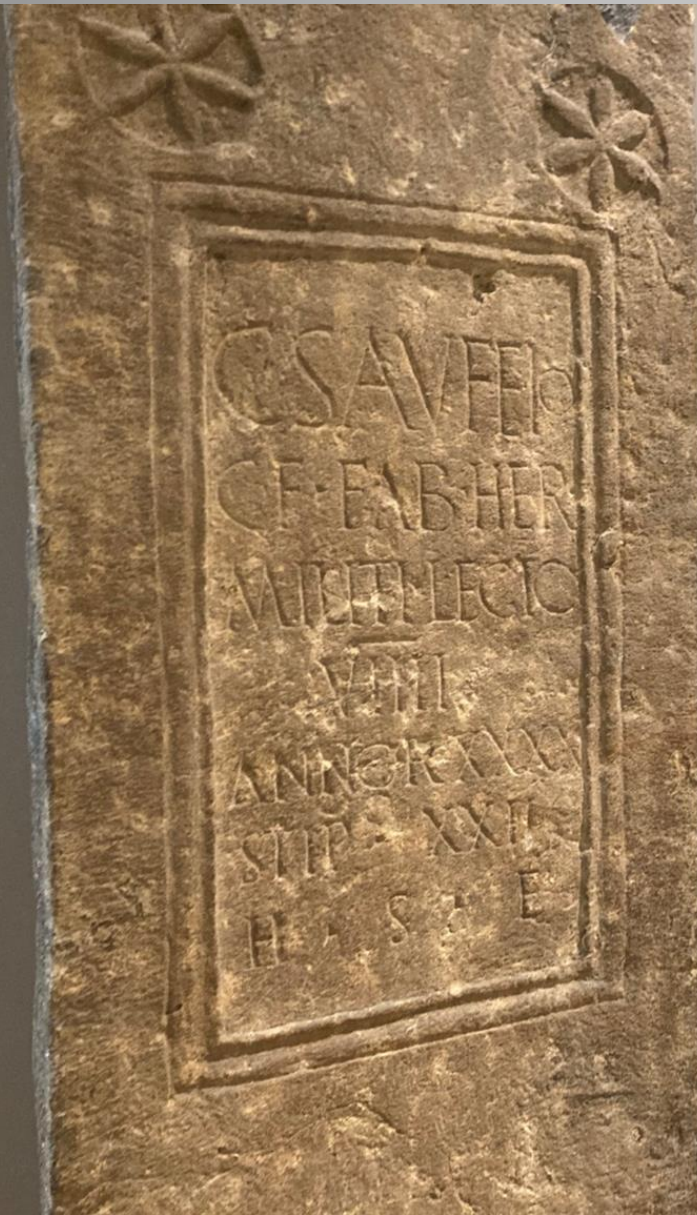
**Tombstone fragment**  
Blackfriars, London

The surviving part shows the head of the deceased man in relief in a niche. He was a military policeman (*speculator*) seconded from the second legion Augusta for special duties, presumably in London. Three of his colleagues from the same corp set up this tombstone. The fragmentary Latin inscription may be translated:

"To the spirits of the departed: [...]r Celsus, son of Lucius, of the Claudian voting-tribe, [from....], *speculator* of the Second legion Augusta Antoniniana; Dardanius Cu[rs]o[r], Rubrius Pudens, and [...]s Probus, *speculatores* of the legion (set this up)."

PRB 1855.8-4.21 RIB 19



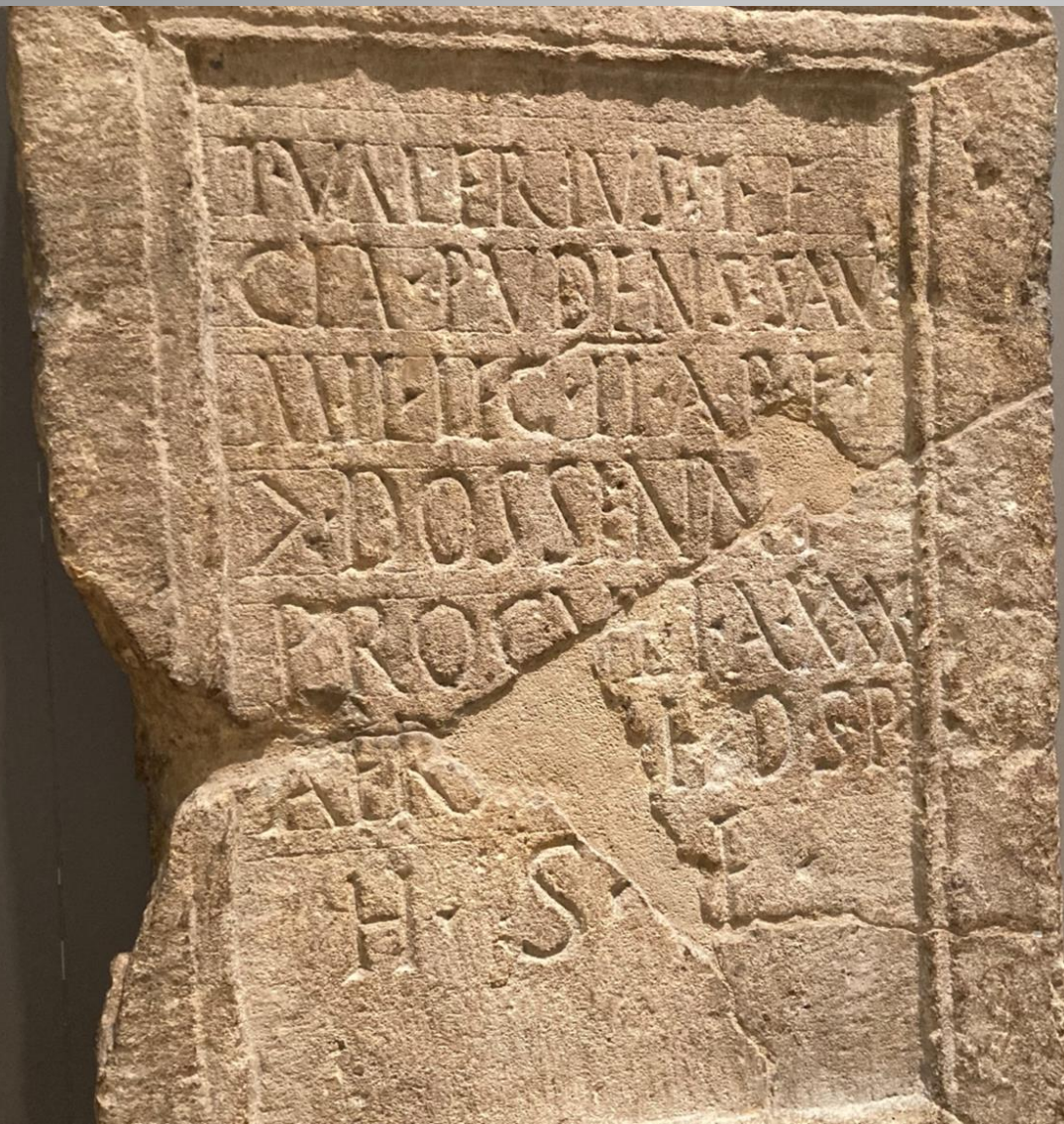


**Tombstone**

1st century AD  
Lincoln

The tombstone, commemorating one of only eight men known from the Ninth legion Hispana, was set up in the 60s AD to the soldier Gaius Saufeius. Saufeius came from the colony of Heraclea in Macedonia and died in post after 22 years service. The inscription may be translated: "To Gaius Saufeius, son of Gaius, of the Fabian voting-tribe, from Heraclea, soldier of the Ninth Legion, aged 40, of 22 years' service; he lies here."

PRB 1873.5.21.1

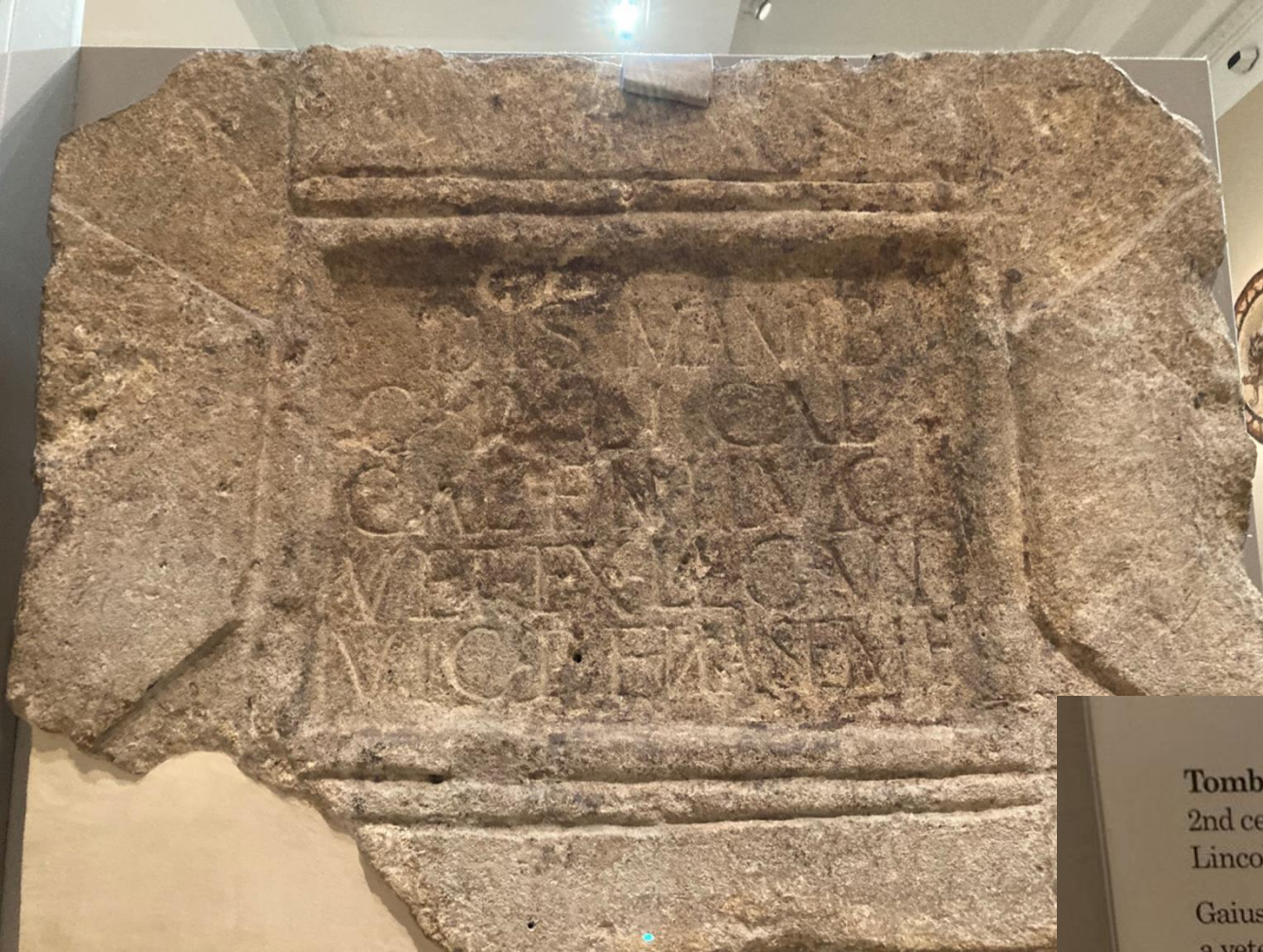


### **Tombstone**

1st century AD  
Lincoln

Tombstone of Titus Valerius Pudens, a soldier of the Second legion Adiutrix, who died, apparently, in AD 76 having served with the unit since its creation in AD 69. The inscription may be translated: 'Titus Valerius Pudens, son of Titus, of the Claudian voting-tribe, from Savaria, a soldier of the Second Legion Adiutrix Pia Fidelis, in the century of Dossennius Proculus, aged 30, of 6 years' service; here he lies. His heir at his own expense set this up.'

Given by Arthur Trollope, Esq.  
PRB 1853.11-8.1

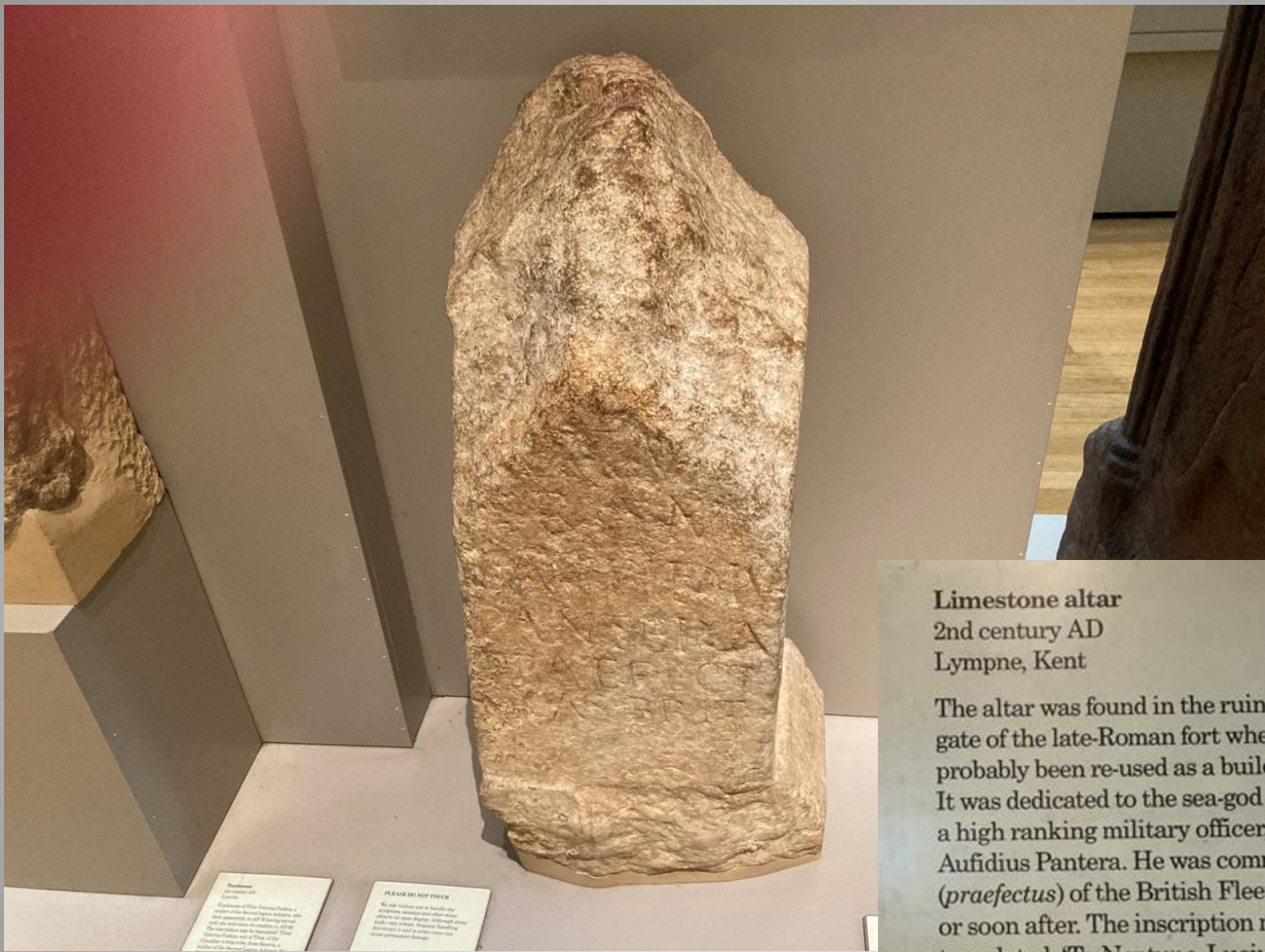


**Tombstone-base**  
2nd century AD  
Lincoln

Gaius Julius Calenus, a native of Lyons, was a veteran of the Sixth legion Victrix, which was brought to Britain in AD 122 to help build Hadrian's Wall. Calenus must have completed his 25 years' service after AD 122 and chosen to retire to Lincoln. The inscription may be translated: 'To the spirits of the departed (and) of Gaius Julius Calenus, of the Galerian voting-tribe, from Lyons, veteran from the Sixth Legion Victrix Pia Fidelis; Julia Sempronia, his daughter, (set this up).'

Given by Arthur Trollope, Esq.  
PRB 1866.12-8.1

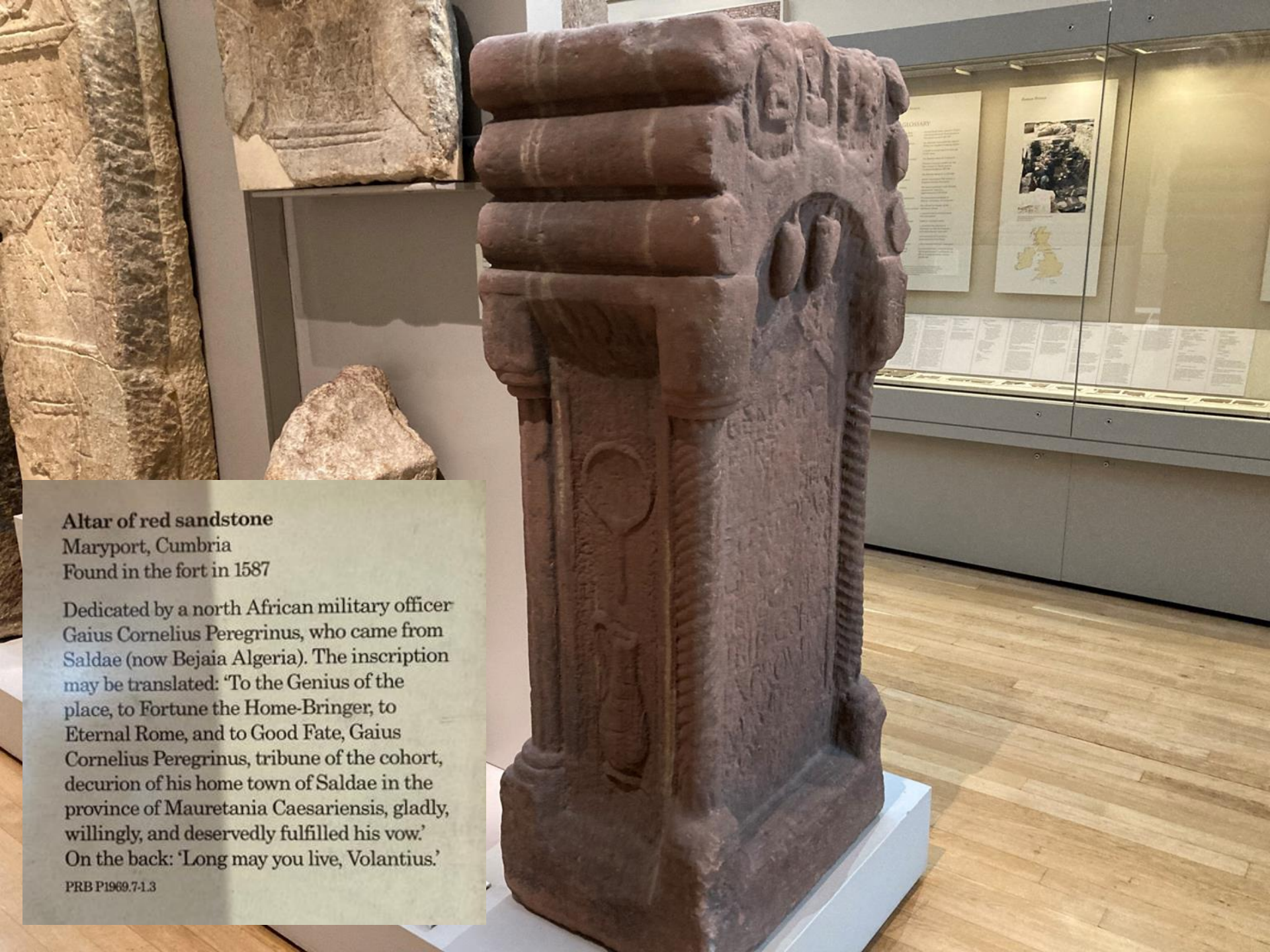




**Limestone altar**  
2nd century AD  
Lympne, Kent

The altar was found in the ruins of the east gate of the late-Roman fort where it had probably been re-used as a building stone. It was dedicated to the sea-god Neptune by a high ranking military officer, Lucius Aufidius Pantera. He was commander (*praefectus*) of the British Fleet in AD 133 or soon after. The inscription may be translated: 'To Neptune, Lucius Aufidius Pantera, prefect of the British Fleet, (set up this) altar.'

PRB 1856 7-1.5026



**Altar of red sandstone**  
Maryport, Cumbria  
Found in the fort in 1587

Dedicated by a north African military officer Gaius Cornelius Peregrinus, who came from Saldæ (now Bejaia Algeria). The inscription may be translated: 'To the Genius of the place, to Fortune the Home-Bringer, to Eternal Rome, and to Good Fate, Gaius Cornelius Peregrinus, tribune of the cohort, decurion of his home town of Saldæ in the province of Mauretania Caesariensis, gladly, willingly, and deservedly fulfilled his vow.' On the back: 'Long may you live, Volantius.'

PRB P1969.7-1.3

# GRAVE-GROUPS

Possessions placed in a grave at the time of death have a special importance for archaeologists. Not only do they provide information about spiritual beliefs and funeral ritual, but they form collections of closely dated material: if the date of the burial can be estimated, we know that all the objects in it must have been in use at or before that date.

The three cremation burials whose contents are shown here are of different dates and were excavated in very different circumstances. The late Iron Age grave from King Harry Lane, St Albans, demonstrates that Roman artefacts and customs were already familiar in Britain before the military conquest in AD 43. The grave from Elsenham, Essex, though so disturbed by ploughing that precise recording was not feasible, is important because it contains a very rare and interesting type of enamelled vessel, and is dated by pottery and coins. The other grave-group, from Southfleet, is an early discovery from an important site, and includes another exceptional find, the elegant pair of shoes.



The objects from Grave 346 in the King Harry Lane, St Albans, cemetery are displayed in this case: the picture shows the grave during excavation.  
Photo: A.L. Percival.



**King Harry Lane, St Albans, Herts**  
1st quarter of 1st century AD

The King Harry Lane site was excavated in the 1960s when threatened by building development. The well-equipped cremation grave displayed here is from the Iron Age cemetery, and the person buried in it died perhaps a generation before Britain became a province of the Roman Empire: yet his possessions included not only locally-made pottery but fine Roman tablewares made in Gaul and Italy and imported from the Continent.



**Elsenham, near Stansted, Essex**  
2nd century AD

The plough-damaged cremation grave from which these objects came was excavated by the donors in September 1990. Most of the contents had been scattered, but the group as a whole may be dated by the coins, the latest of which is a denarius of Antoninus Pius issued in about 145-8, and by the Samian ware vessels, made in the second half of the 2nd century.

The grave was a rich one, and included an iron lamp, the key and lock-plate of a box, an unusual bronze cup and a gaming-set of bone and glass counters, as well as the valuable little container with intricate enamelled decoration.

PRP P1991.12-1.1 (*pyxis*)  
Presented by The British Museum Friends to  
commemorate the Directorship of  
Sir David Wilson  
PRB P1991.12-2.1-43  
Presented by G. Barker Esq., J. Hayes Esq., and  
an anonymous donor





## THE ELSENHAM PYXIS

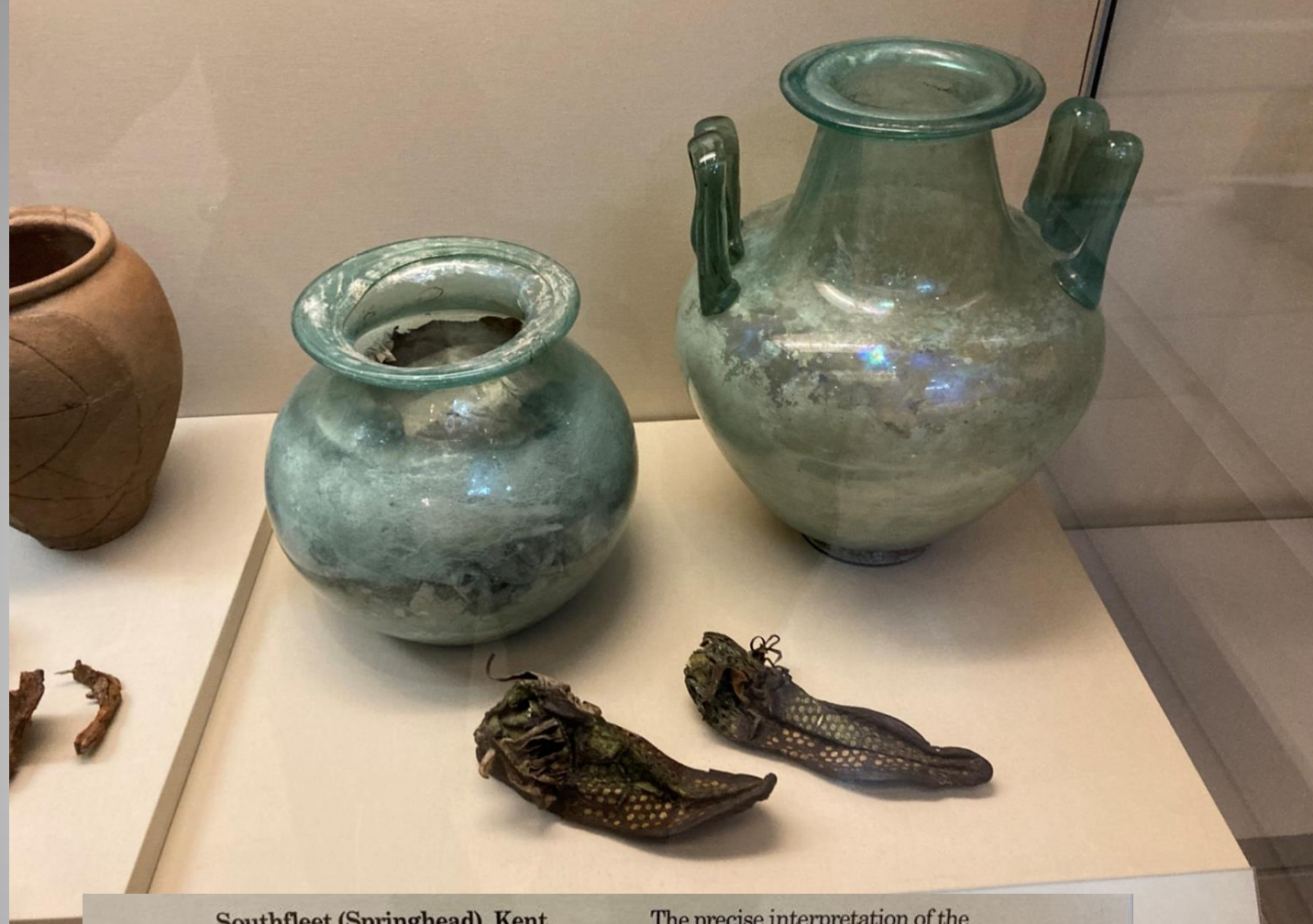
The small hexagonal *pyxis* (box) constructed of bronze panels decorated with *millefiori* enamel belongs to a rare type made in the Rhineland or the Low Countries. Examples have been found as far afield as Greece and Syria, but the Elsenham specimen is the only one which comes from a datable archaeological context. It would originally have had a small round lid and suspension chains attached to the loops on the top plate. The technique of manufacture, seen also on some bronze brooches, requires the skills of the bronzesmith, the glassworker and the gem-cutter. The function of the vessel is uncertain, but it is most likely to have been an ink-pot.



Enlarged view of the enamelled pyxis



An imaginative reconstruction of a burial in progress at  
Stanway, near Colchester, in about AD 55  
Peter Frost and Colchester Archaeological Trust



**Southfleet (Springhead), Kent**  
2nd-3rd century AD

The objects from Southfleet shown here were excavated in 1801 and presented to the Museum in 1836. The small, plain sarcophagus, displayed near this showcase, formed the centrepiece of a walled cemetery, and though clearly designed as a child's coffin, it contained two glass urns containing cremations, probably of adults, a pair of leather shoes, and fragments of textile which were unfortunately too fragile to survive excavation.

The precise interpretation of the burial is uncertain, and may involve re-burial of an earlier cremation. The shoes, designed for an adult woman, are extremely elaborate, originally purple in colour with a pale lining visible through the openwork and gilded metal thread embellishing the pattern.

Presented by the Rev. George Rashleigh  
PRB 1836.2-13, 17-19

The engraving of a Southfleet shoe is from *Archaeologia*,  
1803.





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PRB 1836.2-13, 17-19

The engraving of a Southfleet shoe is from *Archaeologia*,  
1803.



# LEGIONARY SOLDIERS

In the first two centuries AD the legions were the backbone of the Roman army. They each consisted of about 5000 heavily-armed infantrymen who were highly trained and strictly disciplined. Recruits had to be Roman citizens who generally signed up at the age of 18-20 for a period of 25 years' service. High rates of pay, good promotion prospects and a substantial grant of land or money on retirement ensured a constant supply of recruits.

Each legion was commanded by a general (*legatus Augusti legionis*), a man of senatorial rank selected by the Emperor himself, and six subordinates (*tribuni*). However, the most experienced soldiers in the legion were the sixty centurions, each of whom led a 'century' of eighty men. These junior officers were mostly promoted from the ranks. They directed the soldiers on the battlefield and usually determined the outcome of the battle. Their experience and responsibility were reflected in their pay, which was about twenty times that of the ordinary legionary. Many legionaries must have aspired to the centurionate but there was in any case considerable scope for increasing pay. The complex legionary hierarchy included a number of men with special skills or duties, like standard bearers, musicians, smiths, clerks and medical personnel.



**Two inlaid iron dagger sheaths**  
Mid 1st century AD  
Hod Hill, Dorset

The outer iron plate of dagger sheaths provided a suitable space for decoration, and individual officers or soldiers may well have commissioned personalised pieces. Both these examples are based on zonal geometric designs, but they have been treated very differently. The more complete plate is competently inlaid with thin brass strips, and red and orange enamel while the other is densely inlaid with silver wire and red enamel in a rather irregular arrangement.

PRB 1892.9-1.1212; 1960.4-5.906

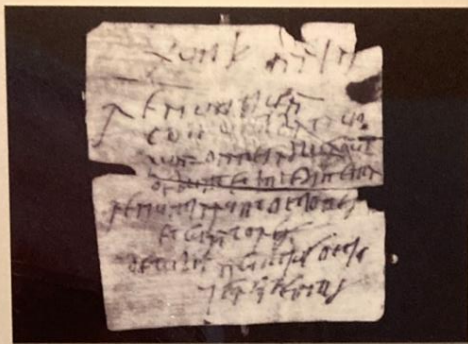


# VINDOLANDA

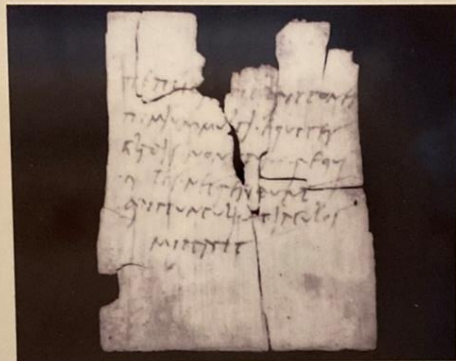
These ink writing-tablets are the oldest surviving handwritten documents from Britain. They come from the Roman fort of *Vindolanda* (Chesterholm), one of the main military posts on the northern frontier of Britain before the building of Hadrian's Wall. The first tablets were discovered there in 1973 and hundreds more fragments have come to light in subsequent archaeological excavations.

Waterlogged conditions preserved the tablets in rubbish deposits in and around the commanding officer's residence. They date mainly to the phase of activity between about AD 92-120, a period of great significance for the history of Britain's northern frontier. During that time the fort was garrisoned variously by the First Tungrian Cohort and the Ninth Batavian Cohort, and most of the tablets are official military documents relating to those auxiliary units. However, numerous others are the private letters sent to, or occasionally written by, the serving soldiers and officers. Together, they give a remarkable insight into the working and private lives of the Roman garrison in this remote outpost fort on the edge of the Empire.

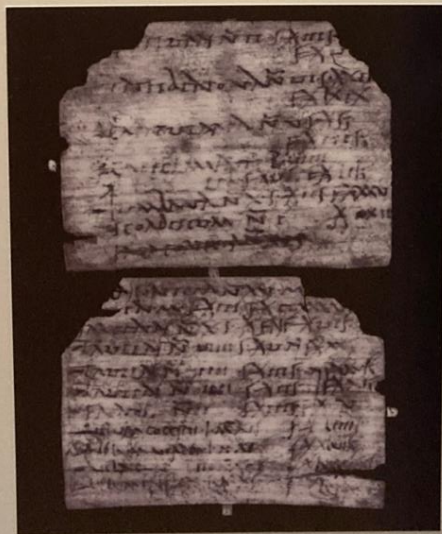
The tablets are fragile and vulnerable even after specialised conservation and they require a carefully-controlled environment. The present display is a selection of the best preserved examples.



Tablet 2, military report. Infra-red photograph



Tablet 3, intelligence report. Infra-red photograph



Tablet 5, inventory or memorandum. Infra-red photograph

## 1 Strength report

### Translation

'18 May, net number of the First Cohort of Tungrians, of which the commander is Iulius Verecundus the prefect, 752, including centurions 6 of whom there are absent: guards of the governor 46; at the office of Ferox?; at Coria 337, including centurions 2 (?); at London centurion 1 (?); ... 6, including centurion 1; ... 9, including centurion 1; ... 11; at (?) ... 1 (?); ... 45; total absentees 456, including centurions 5; remainder, present 296, including centurion 1; from these: sick 15; wounded 6; suffering from inflammation of the eyes 10; total of these 31; remainder, fit for active service 265, including centurion 1'

This is a strength report of the First Cohort of Tungrians, probably dating to about AD 92-7. It is the first of its kind from Britain, a most important military document which sheds light on the deployment and organisation of military units. The regiment was probably a milliary cohort, and the tablet shows it was close to its full complement of 800 men, though it was 4 centurions short of the normal total of 10.

Of the 752 soldiers on the roll only 296 were present at the base garrison, of whom just 265 were fit for active service. Most of the absentees were a detachment of 337 on a tour of duty at nearby Corbridge (Coria). A further 46 were detached for duty as guards with the governor of the province. They were assigned to a man named Ferox, who may have been the commander of the Ninth legion Hispana at York.

FRB P1989. 6.2.21. Tab. Vindol. II. 154

## 2 Military report (*renuntium*)

### Reconstructed text

xvii K Maias  
renuntium  
coh viiii Batauo  
rum omnes ad loca qui  
debunt et impedimenta  
renuntiarunt optiones  
et curatores  
detulit Arcuittius optio  
(centuriae) Crescens

### Translation

'15 May, report of the 9th cohort of Batavians. All who ought to be at their stations are there, as is the baggage. The report was made by the *optiones* and the curators. Arcuittius, *optio* of the century of Crescens delivered it.'

A novelty among the Vindolanda tablets, which sheds new light on day-to-day military routine, is the finding of large numbers of reports with the *renuntium* heading. They appear to be routine checks on personnel and equipment, made at regular (perhaps daily) intervals, and submitted by *optiones* (deputy centurions). The need for such 'all present and correct' reports is understandable in view of the numerous detachments from the main garrison outposted or engaged in special tasks away from base (see tablet 1).

FRB P1995. 7.1.21

## 3 Intelligence r Reconstructed

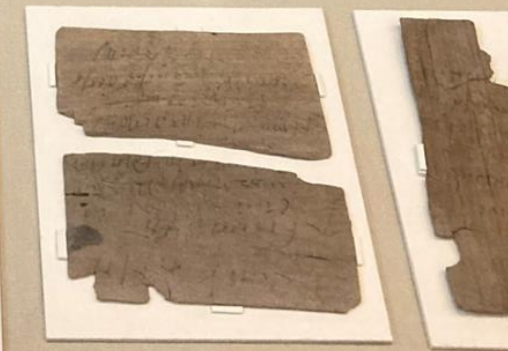
nenu....[.]n. Br  
nimium multi  
gladis • non  
tes • nec  
Brittunculi •  
mittant

### Translation

'...the Britons are u  
(?). There are very n  
cavalry do not use s  
wretched Britons mo  
javelins.'

A tantalizing fragmen  
probably a memorand  
commanding officer fo  
describing the fighting  
Britons. Despite the dis  
to *Brittunculi*, 'Little B  
the document was an ass  
potential for recruitment  
military units.

FRB P1966.10.1.34. Tab. Vindol. II. 164



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qui  
tenta  
mes

s optio  
entis

of the 9th cohort of  
who ought to be at their  
here, as is the baggage. The  
ade by the *optiones* and the  
quittus, *optio* of the century of  
livered it.'

mong the Vindolanda tablets,  
is new light on day-to-day  
outine, is the finding of large  
of reports with the *renuntium*  
They appear to be routine checks  
nel and equipment, made at  
(perhaps daily) intervals, and  
ed by *optiones* (deputy centurions).  
ad for such 'all present and correct'  
is understandable in view of the  
ous detachments from the main  
ion outposted or engaged in special  
away from base (see tablet 1).

1995.7.1.211

### 3 Intelligence report

Reconstructed text

nenu...[.]n. Brittones  
nimium multi • equites  
gladis • non utuntur equi-  
tes • nec residunt  
Brittunculi • ut • iaculos  
mittant

Translation

'...the Britons are unprotected by armour  
(?). There are very many cavalry. The  
cavalry do not use swords nor do the  
wretched Britons mount in order to throw  
javelins.'

A tantalizing fragment of what was  
probably a memorandum, perhaps left by a  
commanding officer for his successor,  
describing the fighting habits of the  
Britons. Despite the disparaging reference  
to *Brittunculi*, 'Little Brits', it may be that  
the document was an assessment of their  
potential for recruitment into the local  
military units.

FRB P1996.10-1.34. Tab. Vindol. II, 164

### 4 Leave request

Reconstructed text

....[.] ha[b]eas • cui •  
des • comneatum  
Córís Messicus t[.]  
rógo • domine [

Translation

'I, Messicus...,ask, my lord, that you  
consider me a worthy person to whom to  
grant leave at Coria.'

A request from a soldier named Messicus  
for a period of leave to be spent at nearby  
Corbridge (Coria). The Vindolanda texts  
have shone new light on the system for  
requesting and granting leave. They are  
written in different hands and although  
they are almost formulaic they are not  
'form letters'. None specifies the number of  
days requested, but there may have been a  
standard grant or, alternatively, the period  
may have been decided once the commander  
knew where the soldier wished to go.

FRB P1996.10-1.137. Tab. Vindol. II, 175

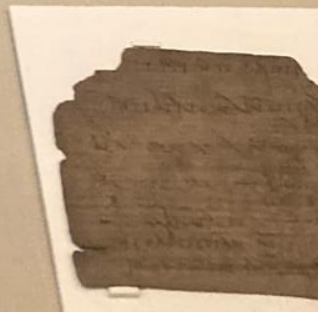
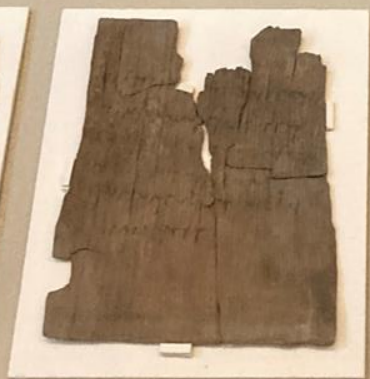
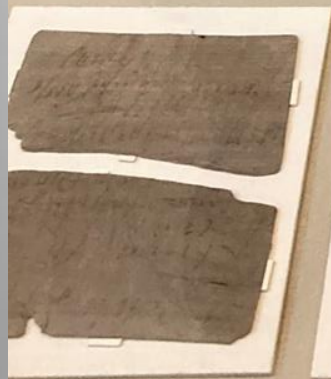
### 5 Inventory or memo

Translation

'Necklace-clasps (?), nu  
each, total 7+ *denarii*. C  
*denarii* each, total 65 *de*  
number 5, *denarius* each  
Hair, 9 pounds in weight,  
pound, total 51 *denarii*. L  
10, 2 *denarii* each, total 2  
(?), number 1, 12 *denarii*. C  
bark (?), number 15 (?). E  
Cloaks made of bark (?), num  
measure(s) (?), ..., 3 *denarii* pe  
total 235+ *denarii*. Bags, num  
*denarius* and 1 *as* each, total 6  
Skillets, number 4, 5 *denarii* an  
total 20 *denarii*. Skillets, num  
*denarii* and 1 *as* each, total 15+  
Skillets, number 4, 2 *denarii* an  
total 11 *denarii*. Reins, number 2  
*denarii* each, total 7 *denarii*. Scarf  
(?) 1, measuring 17, total 54+ *de*  
Green curtain (?). 1, measuring 11,  
+ *denarii*. Purple curtains (?). 2, mea  
11, total 88 *denarii*. ... curtain  
measuring 10, total 55+ *denarii*.'

A complete diptych, with writing on 2  
inner faces and one outer face. The text  
is not a normal account and is thought to  
be part of an informal inventory of  
miscellaneous items and their valuation  
at the residence of the commanding officer  
Flavius Cerealis. It was perhaps compiled  
by a household slave or another individual  
responsible for the domestic  
administration. It is a fascinating list of  
commodities made still more interesting by  
the inclusion of prices.

FRB P1996. 7.1.196





#### 4 Leave request

##### Reconstructed text

...[.] ha[b]leas • cui •  
des • commentum  
Cōris Messicus t[er]m[en]t[is]  
rōgo • domine [ ]

##### Translation

'I, Messicus...ask, my lord, that you consider me a worthy person to whom to grant leave at Coria.'

A request from a soldier named Messicus for a period of leave to be spent at nearby Corbridge (Coria). The Vindolanda texts have shone new light on the system for requesting and granting leave. They are written in different hands and although they are almost formulaic they are not 'form letters'. None specifies the number of days requested, but there may have been a standard grant or, alternatively, the period may have been decided once the commander knew where the soldier wished to go.

FR 9.1306.10-1.137. Tab. Vindol. II, 195

#### 5 Inventory or memorandum

##### Translation

'Necklace-clasps (?), number 2,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  denarii each, total 7+ denarii. Cloaks, number 6,  $11\frac{1}{2}$  denarii each, total 69 denarii. Headbands, number 5,  $\frac{1}{2}$  denarius each, total  $3\frac{1}{2}$  denarii. Hair, 9 pounds in weight,  $5\frac{1}{2}$  denarii per pound, total  $51\frac{1}{2}$  denarii. Drawers, number 10,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  denarii each, total 25 denarii. Saddle (?), number 1, 12 denarii. Cloaks made of bark (?), number 15 (?). [Entry crossed out] Cloaks made of bark (?), number 15, measure(s) (?), 3 denarii per measure (?), total 235+ denarii. Bags, number 10,  $\frac{1}{2}$  denarius and 1 as each, total  $6\frac{1}{2}$  denarii. Skilleto, number 4, 5 denarii and 1 as each, total  $20\frac{1}{2}$  denarii. Skilleto, number 4,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  denarii and 1 as each, total 15 denarii. Skilleto, number 4,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  denarii and 1 as each, total 11 denarii. Reins, number 2,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  denarii each, total 7 denarii. Scarlet curtain (?), 1, measuring  $1\frac{1}{2}$ , total  $54\frac{1}{2}$  denarii. Green curtain (?), 1, measuring  $1\frac{1}{2}$ , total  $46\frac{1}{2}$  denarii. Purple curtains (?), 2, measuring  $1\frac{1}{2}$ , total 88 denarii. ... curtain (?), 1, measuring  $10\frac{1}{2}$ , total 55+ denarii.'

A complete diptych, with writing on both inner faces and one outer face. The text is not a normal account and is thought to be part of an informal inventory of miscellaneous items and their valuations in the residence of the commanding officer, Flavius Cerealis. It was perhaps compiled by a household slave or another individual responsible for the domestic administration. It is a fascinating list of commodities made still more interesting by the inclusion of prices.

FR 9.1306.7-1.136

#### 6 Account

##### Reconstruct

a Gauuone  
bedocem  
fabae  
lanae  
p(ondo)  
tosseas  
mellis  
sagum  
summa  
(den)

Back:

ratio Gauonis

##### Translation

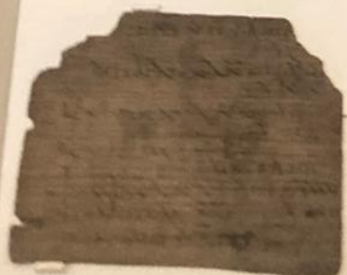
'From Gavo: a cover beans, modii 55 (?), ... lbs, ... denarii 12 denarii ... (?), of hons a sagum, denarii ... ? (Entry crossed out) de

Back:

'Account of Gavo.'

This account is written in cursive script on the upper leaf (the blank lower leaf which has a notch and a t edge. Gavo appears to be an entrepreneur or supplier of miscellaneous variety of textiles was more probably a household of the commanding officer for the ordinary soldiers of

FR 9.1306.10-1.137. Tab. Vindol. II, 195.



## 1 Strength report

### Translation

'18 May, net number of the First Cohort of Tungrians, of which the commander is Iulius Verecundus the prefect, 752, including centurions 6 of whom there are absent: guards of the governor 46; at the office of Ferox?; at Coria 337, including centurions 2 (?); at London centurion 1 (?); ... 6, including centurion 1; ... 9, including centurion 1; ... 11; at (?) ... 1 (?); ... 45; total absentees 456, including centurions 5; remainder, present 296, including centurion 1; from these: sick 15; wounded 6; suffering from inflammation of the eyes 10; total of these 31; remainder, fit for active service 265, including centurion 1'

This is a strength report of the First Cohort of Tungrians, probably dating to about AD 92-7. It is the first of its kind from Britain, a most important military document which sheds light on the deployment and organisation of military units. The regiment was probably a cohort, and the tablet shows it was close to its full complement of 800 men, though it was 4 centurions short of the normal total of 10.

Of the 752 soldiers on the roll only 296 were present at the base garrison, of whom just 265 were fit for active service. Most of the absentees were a detachment of 337 on a tour of duty at nearby Corbridge (Coria). A further 46 were detached for duty as guards with the governor of the province. They were assigned to a man named Ferox, who may have been the commander of the Ninth legion Hispana at York.

PRB P1989.6-2.21. *Tab. Vindol. II*, 154

## 2 Military report (*renuntium*)

### Reconstructed text

xvii K Maias  
*renuntium*  
coh viii Batauo  
rum omnes ad loca qui  
debunt et impedimenta  
renuntiarunt optiones  
et curatores  
detulit Arcuittius optio  
(centuriae) Crescentis

### Translation

'15 May, report of the 9th cohort of Batavians. All who ought to be at the stations are there, as is the baggage. report was made by the *optiones* and curators. Arcuittius, *optio* of the *centuria* *Crescentis* delivered it.'

A novelty among the Vindolanda tablets which sheds new light on day-to-day military routine, is the finding of large numbers of reports with the *renuntium* heading. They appear to be routine reports on personnel and equipment, made at regular (perhaps daily) intervals, and submitted by *optiones* (deputy centurions). The need for such 'all present and accounted for' reports is understandable in view of the numerous detachments from the main garrison outposted or engaged in special tasks away from base (see tablet 1).

PRB P1995.7-1.211



## h report ion

net number of the First Cohort of is, of which the commander is recundus the prefect, 752, ; centurions 6 of whom there are uards of the governor 46; at the Ferox?; at Coria 337, including is 2 (?); at London centurion 1 (?); iding centurion 1; ... 9, including 1; ... 11; at (?) ... 1 (?); ... 45; total 456, including centurions 5; r, present 296, including centurion ese: sick 15; wounded 6; suffering mmation of the eyes 10; total of remainder, fit for active service ding centurion 1'

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.. Tab. Vindol. II, 154

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Reconstructed text

xvii K Maías  
*renuntium*  
coh viii Batauo  
rum omnes ad loca qui  
debunt et impedimenta  
renuntiarunt optiones  
et curatores  
detulit Arcuittius optio  
(centuriae) Crescentis

Translation

'15 May, report of the 9th cohort of Batavians. All who ought to be at their stations are there, as is the baggage. The report was made by the *optiones* and the curators. Arquittius, *optio* of the century of Crescens delivered it.'

A novelty among the Vindolanda tablets, which sheds new light on day-to-day military routine, is the finding of large numbers of reports with the *renuntium* heading. They appear to be routine checks on personnel and equipment, made at regular (perhaps daily) intervals, and submitted by *optiones* (deputy centurions). The need for such 'all present and correct' reports is understandable in view of the numerous detachments from the main garrison outposted or engaged in special tasks away from base (see tablet 1).

PRB P1995.7-1.211

## 3 Intelligence report

Reconstructed text

nenu....[.]n. Brittones  
nimium multi . equites  
gladis . non utuntur equi-  
tes . nec residunt  
Brittunculi . ut . iaculos  
mittant

Translation

'...the Britons are unprotected by armour (?). There are very many cavalry. The cavalry do not use swords nor do the wretched Britons mount in order to throw javelins.'

A tantalizing fragment of what was probably a memorandum, perhaps left by a commanding officer for his successor, describing the fighting habits of the Britons. Despite the disparaging reference to *Brittunculi*, 'Little Brits', it may be that the document was an assessment of their potential for recruitment into the local military units.

PRB P1986.10-1.34. Tab. Vindol. II, 164

### report (*renuntium*)

Reconstructed text

*K Maias  
ntium*

*Batauo  
es ad loca qui  
! impedimenta  
runt optiones  
ratores  
Arquittius optio  
e) Crescentis*

ion

report of the 9th cohort of  
is. All who ought to be at their  
are there, as is the baggage. The  
as made by the *optiones* and the  
Arquittius, *optio* of the century of  
delivered it.'

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eds new light on day-to-day  
routine, is the finding of large  
of reports with the *renuntium*  
They appear to be routine checks  
nnel and equipment, made at  
perhaps daily) intervals, and  
d by *optiones* (deputy centurions).  
for such 'all present and correct'  
s understandable in view of the  
s detachments from the main  
outposted or engaged in special  
y from base (see tablet 1).

.211

### 3 Intelligence report

Reconstructed text

*nenu...[.]n. Brittones  
nimium multi • equites  
gladis • non utuntur equi-  
tes • nec residunt  
Brittunculi • ut • iaculos  
mittant*

Translation

'...the Britons are unprotected by armour  
(?). There are very many cavalry. The  
cavalry do not use swords nor do the  
wretched Britons mount in order to throw  
javelins.'

A tantalizing fragment of what was  
probably a memorandum, perhaps left by a  
commanding officer for his successor,  
describing the fighting habits of the  
Britons. Despite the disparaging reference  
to *Brittunculi*, 'Little Brits', it may be that  
the document was an assessment of their  
potential for recruitment into the local  
military units.

PRB P1986.10-1.34. *Tab. Vindol. II*, 164

### 4 Leave request

Reconstructed text

*...[.] ha[b]leas • cui •  
des • commeatum  
Cōris Messicus t[.]  
rōgo • domine [*

Translation

'I, Messicus...,ask, my lord, that you  
consider me a worthy person to whom to  
grant leave at Coria.'

A request from a soldier named Messicu  
for a period of leave to be spent at near  
Corbridge (Coria). The Vindolanda text  
have shone new light on the system for  
requesting and granting leave. They are  
written in different hands and although  
they are almost formulaic they are not  
'form letters'. None specifies the numbe  
days requested, but there may have beer  
standard grant or, alternatively, the per  
may have been decided once the comma  
knew where the soldier wished to go.

PRB P1986.10-1.137. *Tab. Vindol. II*, 175



the report  
of the text

Brittones  
ulti • equites  
non utuntur equi-  
nec residunt  
i • ut • iaculos  
t

n

sons are unprotected by armour  
are very many cavalry. The  
not use swords nor do the  
Britons mount in order to throw

ing fragment of what was  
a memorandum, perhaps left by a  
ing officer for his successor,  
g the fighting habits of the  
Despite the disparaging reference  
sculi, 'Little Brits', it may be that  
ment was an assessment of their  
for recruitment into the local  
units.

1.34. *Tab. Vindol. II, 164*

#### 4 Leave request

Reconstructed text

....[.] ha[b]leas • cui •  
des • commeatum  
Córis Messicus t[.]  
rógo • domine [

Translation

'I, Messicus...,ask, my lord, that you  
consider me a worthy person to whom to  
grant leave at Coria.'

A request from a soldier named Messicus  
for a period of leave to be spent at nearby  
Corbridge (Coria). The Vindolanda texts  
have shone new light on the system for  
requesting and granting leave. They are  
written in different hands and although  
they are almost formulaic they are not  
'form letters'. None specifies the number of  
days requested, but there may have been a  
standard grant or, alternatively, the period  
may have been decided once the commander  
knew where the soldier wished to go.

PRB P1986.10-1.137. *Tab. Vindol. II, 175*

#### 5 Inventory or memorandum

Translation

'Necklace-clasps (?), number 2,  $3\frac{1}{2}$ + denarii  
each, total 7+ denarii. Cloaks, number 6,  
denarii each, total 69 denarii. Headbands  
number 5,  $3\frac{3}{4}$  denarius each, total  $3\frac{3}{4}$  denar  
Hair, 9 pounds in weight,  $5\frac{3}{4}$  denarii per  
pound, total  $51\frac{3}{4}$  denarii. Drawers, numbe  
10,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  denarii each, total 25 denarii. Sade  
(?), number 1, 12 denarii. Cloaks made of  
bark (?), number 15 (?), ... [Entry crossed  
Cloaks made of bark (?), number 15,  
measure(s) (?) ... , 3 denarii per measure (?  
total 235+ denarii. Bags, number 10,  $\frac{5}{8}$   
denarius and 1 as each, total  $6\frac{7}{8}$  denarii.  
Skillets, number 4. 5 denarii and 1 as eac  
total  $20\frac{1}{4}$  denarii. Skillets, number 4.  $3\frac{7}{8}$   
denarii and 1 as each, total  $15\frac{3}{4}$  denarii.  
Skillets, number 4.  $2\frac{7}{8}$  denarii and 1 as ea  
total  $11\frac{3}{4}$  denarii. Reins, number 2.  $3\frac{1}{2}$   
denarii each, total 7 denarii. Scarlet curt  
(?). 1. measuring  $1\frac{1}{2}$ , total  $54\frac{1}{2}$ + denarii.  
Green curtain (?). 1. measuring  $1\frac{1}{2}$ , total  
+ denarii. Purple curtains (?). 2. measuri  
 $11\frac{1}{2}$ , total  $88\frac{3}{4}$  (?) denarii. ... curtain (?),  
measuring  $10\frac{1}{2}$ , total 55+ denarii.'

A complete diptych, with writing on bo  
inner faces and one outer face. The tex  
not a normal account and is thought to  
part of an informal inventory of  
miscellaneous items and their valuatio  
the residence of the commanding offic  
Flavius Cerealis. It was perhaps compi  
by a household slave or another indivi  
responsible for the domestic  
administration. It is a fascinating list  
commodities made still more interestin  
the inclusion of prices.

PRB P1995. 7-1.196

t  
l text

• cui •  
eatum  
is t[...]  
ne [

ask, my lord, that you  
worthy person to whom to  
Coria.'

a soldier named Messicus  
leave to be spent at nearby  
ria). The Vindolanda texts  
w light on the system for  
granting leave. They are  
rent hands and although  
t formulaic they are not  
None specifies the number of  
, but there may have been a  
; or, alternatively, the period  
decided once the commander  
e soldier wished to go.

Tab. Vindol. II, 175

## 5 Inventory or memorandum

Translation

'Necklace-clasps (?), number 2,  $3\frac{1}{2}$  denarii each, total  $7\frac{1}{2}$  denarii. Cloaks, number 6,  $11\frac{1}{2}$  denarii each, total 69 denarii. Headbands, number 5,  $\frac{3}{4}$  denarius each, total  $3\frac{3}{4}$  denarii. Hair, 9 pounds in weight,  $5\frac{3}{4}$  denarii per pound, total  $51\frac{3}{4}$  denarii. Drawers, number 10,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  denarii each, total 25 denarii. Saddle (?), number 1, 12 denarii. Cloaks made of bark (?), number 15 (?). ... [Entry crossed out] Cloaks made of bark (?), number 15, measure(s) (?) ..., 3 denarii per measure (?), total  $235\frac{1}{2}$  denarii. Bags, number 10,  $\frac{5}{8}$  denarius and 1 as each, total  $6\frac{5}{8}$  denarii. Skillets, number 4. 5 denarii and 1 as each, total  $20\frac{1}{4}$  denarii. Skillets, number 4.  $3\frac{7}{8}$  denarii and 1 as each, total  $15\frac{3}{4}$  denarii. Skillets, number 4.  $2\frac{7}{8}$  denarii and 1 as each, total  $11\frac{3}{4}$  denarii. Reins, number 2.  $3\frac{1}{2}$  denarii each, total 7 denarii. Scarlet curtain (?). 1. measuring  $11\frac{1}{2}$ , total  $54\frac{1}{2}$  denarii. Green curtain (?). 1. measuring  $11\frac{1}{2}$ , total  $46\frac{1}{2}$  denarii. Purple curtains (?). 2. measuring  $11\frac{1}{2}$ , total  $88\frac{3}{4}$  denarii. ... curtain (?), 1, measuring  $10\frac{1}{2}$ , total  $55\frac{1}{2}$  denarii.'

A complete diptych, with writing on both inner faces and one outer face. The text is not a normal account and is thought to be part of an informal inventory of miscellaneous items and their valuations in the residence of the commanding officer, Flavius Cerealis. It was perhaps compiled by a household slave or another individual responsible for the domestic administration. It is a fascinating list of commodities made still more interesting by the inclusion of prices.

PRB P1995. 7-1.196

6 A  
R  
a







mus greeting. I wanted  
letter has been sent to me  
which he writes to me that I  
to him what I have done  
. As to which, if you have  
regard with the  
you write back to me with  
that I can similarly  
reply. If you have made any  
intermediary (?), I will issue  
no delay in proportion to  
[time I have spent]. Let this be  
written in this to you I was  
1. I wish you may be in  
my father sends you his  
(Left margin) If you  
please send a note of  
it I may be the more  
[reliable] at Vindolanda. To  
you from Maior.'

A complete diptych is  
shown on the inner faces  
of the left margin. It is  
a wax tablet which has the  
word 'da' marked on the  
subject of the letter is  
the writer's father has  
written about. The  
1 and the obvious  
subject suggest that it  
is a spindle, the large iron  
spindles turned. Maior and  
I have been involved in  
this, not unnaturally  
in the form of corn.

#### 10 Letter to Flavius Cerealis Reconstructed text

Column i:

*Niger et Brocchus Ceriali  
suo salutem  
optamus frater it quot  
acturus es felicis-  
simum sit erit autem  
quom et uotis nostris*

Column ii:

*conueniat hoc  
pro te precari et tu  
sis dignissimus con-  
sulari n(ostro) utique ma-  
turius occurres  
optamus frater  
bene ualere te  
domine ... no exspec*

Back:

*[Fl]au[io] Cerial[i]  
[prae]f[ecto] coh[ortis]*

Translation:

'Niger and Brocchus to their Cerialis,  
greeting. We pray, brother, that what you are  
about to do will be most successful. It will be  
so, indeed, since it is both in accord with our  
wishes to make this prayer on your behalf  
and you yourself are most worthy. You will  
assuredly meet our governor quite soon. (2nd  
hand) We pray, our lord and brother, that you  
are in good health ... expect ... (?)'

Back:

(1st hand) 'To Flavius Cerialis, prefect of the  
cohort ...'

A complete well-preserved diptych written  
in two columns in an elegant script. The  
slim letters have marked ascenders and  
descenders and there is little use of  
ligature (joining together of letters). While  
not explicit, the subject matter of this brief  
letter evidently concerns a matter of some  
importance to Cerealis, the unit commander,  
involving a forthcoming meeting with the  
governor of the province of Britain. In  
another tablet, a draft letter, Cerealis had  
enlisted the aid of a well-placed  
intermediary to secure this meeting, so it  
would appear he had been successful.

PRB P1980.3-3.21. *Tab. Vindol. II, 248*



Portrait from Pompeii  
National Museum, Naples

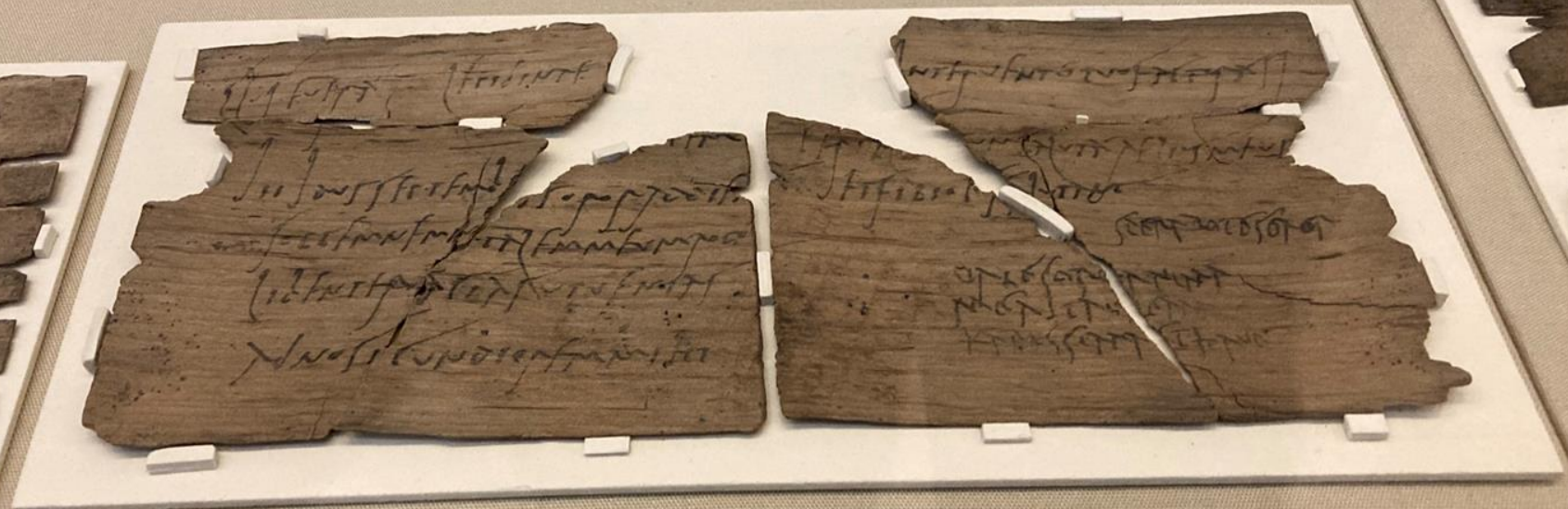
‘Claudia Severa to her Lepidina,  
greetings. On 11 September ...  
for the ... celebration of my birthday,  
I give you a warm invitation ...’

and hail.

Back:  
(1st hand) 'To Sulpicia Lepidina, wife of  
Cerialis, from Severa.'

close friendship and with  
literal sense). The ident  
Briga is not known thou  
near to Vindolanda.

PRB P1986.10-1.46. Tab. Vindol II, 292



11

ptych written  
script. The  
nders and  
use of  
etters). While  
er of this brief  
atter of some  
it commander,  
ing with the  
ritain. In  
Cerealis had  
ed  
eeting, so it  
cessful.

## 11 Birthday invitation to Sulpicia Lepidina

Reconstructed text

Column i:

*Cl(audia) • Seuerá Lepidinae [suae  
[sa]ll[u]stem*

*iii Idus Septembr[e]s soror ad diem  
sollemnem natalem meum rogó  
libenter faciás ut uenias  
ad nos iucundiozem mihi*

Column ii:

*[diem] interuentú tuo facturá si*

*Cerial[em] tjuum salutá Aelius meus [ ]  
et filioli[us] salutant*

*sperabo te soror  
uale soror anima  
mea ita ualeam  
karissima et haue*

Back:

*Sulpiciae Lepidinae*

*Cerialis*

*a S[e]uera*

Translation

'Claudia Severa to her Lepidina greetings.  
On 11 September, sister, for the day of the  
celebration of my birthday, I give you a warm  
invitation to make sure that you come to us,  
to make the day more enjoyable for me by  
your arrival, if you are present (?). Give my  
greetings to your Cerialis. My Aelius and my  
little son send him (?) their greetings. (2nd  
hand) I shall expect you sister. Farewell,  
sister, my dearest soul, as I hope to prosper,  
and hail.'

Back:

(1st hand) 'To Sulpicia Lepidina, wife of  
Cerialis, from Severa.'

Sulpicia Lepidina was the wife of Flavius  
Cerealis, prefect of the Ninth Cohort of  
Batavians. This birthday invitation is one of  
two letters she received from Claudia Severa,  
wife of Aelius Brocchus. The scribe who  
wrote the greater part of this letter is the  
same person who wrote the letter from Niger  
and Brocchus to Flavius Cerealis (10). The  
tall elegant script contrasts with the  
competent but less accomplished three-line  
closure written by Severa herself. That, and  
similar closures on 12 and one other letter  
from Severa, is the earliest known example of  
writing in Latin by a woman (about  
AD 97-103).

PRB P1986.10-1.64. *Tab. Vindol. II, 291*

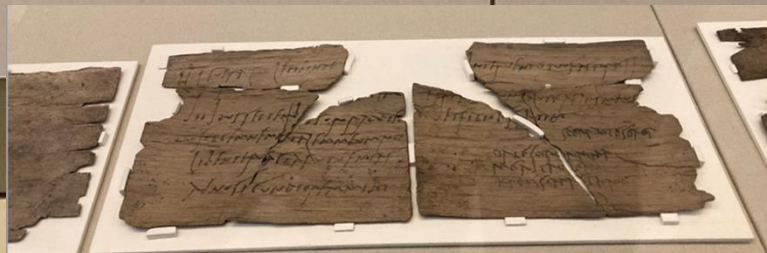
## 12 Letter to Translati

'... greeti  
sister, and  
Brocchus  
him and h  
it was alv  
together'  
way I can  
things wh  
which yo  
I was ... a  
Cerialis ]  
(Back, 2r  
dearest a  
To Sulpi  
Severa, v

This ratl  
survival  
more th  
example  
on the r  
text run  
broad co  
the scrib  
double c  
letter co  
part of  
greeting  
with the

The int  
the wor  
(but the  
close fr  
literal ;  
Briga i  
near to

PRB P1986



Sulpicia Lepidina was the wife of Flavius Cerealis, prefect of the Ninth Cohort of Praetorians. This birthday invitation is one of the 12 letters she received from Claudia Severa, wife of Aelius Brocchus. The scribe who wrote the greater part of this letter is the same person who wrote the letter from Niger to Aelius Brocchus to Flavius Cerealis (10). The elegant script contrasts with the competent but less accomplished three-line measure written by Severa herself. That, and similar closures on 12 and one other letter from Severa, is the earliest known example of writing in Latin by a woman (about 97-103).

P1986.10-1.64. *Tab. Vindol. II, 291*

## 12 Letter to Sulpicia Lepidina

### Translation

'... greetings. Just as I had spoken with you, sister, and promised that I would ask Brocchus and would come to you, I asked him and he gave me the following reply, that it was always readily (?) permitted to me, together with ... to come to you in whatever way I can. For there are certain essential things which ... you will receive my letters by which you will know what I am going to do ... I was ... and will remain at Briga. Greet your Cerialis from me.'

(Back, *2nd hand*) Farewell my sister, my dearest and most longed-for soul. (*1st hand*) To Sulpicia Lepidina, wife of Cerialis, from Severa, wife of Brocchus (?)'

This rather poorly preserved tablet is a rare survival at Vindolanda of a letter written on more than one diptych (13 is the only other example). It is rather curiously set out, for on the remains of the first double leaf the text runs right across both leaves in a single broad column, while on the second diptych the scribe changed to the more normal double column format. Finally, while the letter continued on a third diptych (only part of one half surviving), Severa's closing greeting was written on the back, together with the address.

The intimate tone of the letter indicates that the women were in regular correspondence (but the use of the word 'sister' was one of close friendship and was not meant in its literal sense). The identification of the place Briga is not known though it was probably near to Vindolanda.

PRB P1986.10-1.46. *Tab. Vindol. II, 292*

wife of

close friendship (in  
literal sense). The identification of the place  
Briga is not known though it was probably  
near to Vindolanda.  
PRB P1986.10-1.46. Tab. Vindol II, 292

since he had had...  
cash, I would have given him them.

12

13

# GLOSSARY

Batavians,  
9th Cohort                      an auxiliary unit, raised in Gaul,  
which garrisoned Vindolanda in  
the years around AD 100

*beneficiarius*                      an adjutant seconded for special  
duties to a higher-ranking officer

*bracis*                              a kind of cereal used in making  
Celtic beer

Cataractonium                      the Roman name of Catterick

Cerealis                              Flavius Cerealis, prefect of the  
9th Cohort of Batavians at  
Vindolanda about AD 100

Coria                                the Roman name of Corbridge

fish sauce                              *muria* was a spicy fish sauce, a  
Roman culinary favourite

*modius*                              the most-commonly used Roman  
measure of capacity,  
approximately 8.62 litres

*optio (optiones)*                      the second-in-command or  
deputy centurion of a century

prefect  
(*praefectus cohortis*)                      the officer in charge of an  
auxiliary cohort

*renuntium*                              a regular report on personnel  
and equipment

*sagacia, sagum*                      kinds of military cloak

*saturnalia*                              a carnival-like festival in  
December in which everyone

## GLOSSARY

Batavians, 9th Cohort	an auxiliary unit, raised in Gaul, which garrisoned Vindolanda in the years around AD 100
<i>beneficiarius</i>	an adjutant seconded for special duties to a higher-ranking officer
<i>bracis</i>	a kind of cereal used in making Celtic beer
Cataractonium	the Roman name of Catterick
Cerealis	Flavius Cerealis, prefect of the 9th Cohort of Batavians at Vindolanda about AD 100
Coria	the Roman name of Corbridge
fish sauce	<i>muria</i> was a spicy fish sauce, a Roman culinary favourite
<i>modius</i>	the most-commonly used Roman measure of capacity,



Cerealis	Flavius Cerealis, prefect of the 9th Cohort of Batavians at Vindolanda about AD 100
Coria	the Roman name of Corbridge
fish sauce	<i>muria</i> was a spicy fish sauce, a Roman culinary favourite
<i>modius</i>	the most-commonly used Roman measure of capacity, approximately 8.62 litres
<i>optio (optiones)</i>	the second-in-command or deputy centurion of a century
prefect ( <i>praefectus cohortis</i> )	the officer in charge of an auxiliary cohort
<i>renuntium</i>	a regular report on personnel and equipment
<i>sagacia, sagum</i>	kinds of military cloak
<i>saturnalia</i>	a carnival-like festival in December in which everyone, including slaves, took part
<i>sextarius</i>	one-sixteenth of a <i>modius</i> , approximately 0.54 litres
skillet ( <i>trulla</i> )	a deep-bowled military saucepan
Tungrians, 1st Cohort	an auxiliary unit, raised in Gaul, which garrisoned Vindolanda, in full or in part, between about

prefect ( <i>praefectus cohortis</i> )	the officer in charge of an auxiliary cohort
<i>renuntium</i>	a regular report on personnel and equipment
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<i>saturnalia</i>	a carnival-like festival in December in which everyone, including slaves, took part
<i>sextarius</i>	one-sixteenth of a <i>modius</i> , approximately 0.54 litres
skillet ( <i>trulla</i> )	a deep-bowled military saucepan
Tungrians, 1st Cohort	an auxiliary unit, raised in Gaul, which garrisoned Vindolanda, in full or in part, between about AD 90-120

Reconstructed texts and translations by Dr A.K. Bowman and J.D. Thomas. See A.K. Bowman and J.D. Thomas, *The Vindolanda Writing-tablets*, and Alan K. Bowman, *Life and Letters on the Roman Frontier* (both British Museum Press, London 1994, available at the Museum bookshop).

## 13 Letter to Candidus

Translation

'Octavius to his brother Candidus, greetings. The hundred pounds of sinew from Marinus - I will settle up. From the time when you wrote about this matter, he has not even mentioned it to me. I have several times written to you that I have bought about five thousand *modii* of ears of grain, on account of which I need cash. Unless you send me some cash, at least five hundred *denarii*, the result will be that I shall lose what I have laid out as a deposit, about three hundred *denarii*, and I shall be embarrassed. So, I ask you, send me some cash as soon as possible. The hides which you write are at Cataractonium - write that they be given to me and the wagon about which you write. And write to me what is with that wagon. I would have already been to collect them except that I did not care to injure the animals while the roads are bad. See with Tertius about the 8½ *denarii* which he received from Fatalis. He has not credited them to my account. Know that I have completed the 170 hides and I have 119 *modii* of threshed *bracis*. Make sure that you send me cash so that I may have ears of grain on the threshing-floor. Moreover, I have already finished threshing all that I had. A messmate of our friend Frontius has been here. He was wanting me to allocate (?) him hides and that being so, was ready to give cash. I told him I would give him the hides by 1 March. He decided that he would come on 13 January. He did not turn up nor did he take any trouble to obtain them since he had hides. If he had given the cash, I would have given him them. [cont.]

Translation continued

I hear that Frontinius Iulius has for sale at a high price the leather ware (?) which he bought here for five *denarii* apiece. Greet Spectatus and ... and Firmus. I have received letters from Gleuco. Farewell.

Back:

(Deliver) at Vindolanda.'

This, the most impressive and extensive letter found so far, consists of two complete diptychs with notches and tie-holes. It is a rapidly-written business letter by Octavius, an entrepreneur supplying goods on a considerable scale to the Roman army. The style is colloquial, with a variety of financial idioms and a few technical terms. The well-preserved text is slightly obscured by 'offsets', which were caused when the leaves were folded before the ink had dried. The use of the abbreviation *Vindol* on the back in place of the normal address implies that the letter was brought to Candidus at Vindolanda by an acquaintance.

The writer may have been left-handed since the normal letter format has been reversed: page 1, top right; page 2, top left; page 3, bottom right; page 4, bottom left. The closing, greeting and main letter are in the same hand suggesting that the writing is that of Octavius himself. He evidently wrote the letter in haste to judge by the form of the script, the offsets and a number of mis-spellings and this may have been related to his main concern, the urgent need for cash. The letter sheds valuable light on the scale and sophistication of financial dealings in northern Britain at this time.

PRB P1989.6-2.74. Tab.Vindol. II,343

14 |



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14 Letter to Flavius Cerialis  
Reconstructed text

*Flauio Ceriali praef(ecto)  
coh(ortis) •  
a Iustino col(lega) •*

Translation

'To Flavius Cerialis, prefect of the cohort,  
from Iustinus his colleague.'

The back of the right-hand leaf of this  
diptych is displayed in order to show the  
way in which the Vindolanda letters were  
addressed. The writer, Iustinus, was  
probably prefect of another auxiliary unit.

PRB P1988.10-5.34. *Tab. Vindol. II,260*

15 Letter to Veldedeius  
Reconstructed text

Column i:

*Chrauttius Veldeio suo fratri  
contubernali antiquo pluri-  
mam salutem  
et rogo te Veldei frater miror  
quod mihi tot tempus nihil  
rescripsti a parentibus nos-  
tris si quid audieris aut  
Quot.m in quo numero  
sit et illum a me salutabis  
s uerbis meis et Virilem  
ueterinarium rogabis  
illum ut forficem*

Column ii:

*quam mihi promissit pretio  
mittas per aliquem de nostris  
et rogo te frater Virilis  
salutes a me Thuttenam  
sororem Velbuteium  
rescribas nobis cum ...  
se habeat  
opt<o>sis felicissimus  
uale*

Back:

*Londini  
Veldedeio  
equisioni co(n)s(ularis)  
a Chrauttio  
fratre*

Translat

'Chrautt  
messmat  
you, bro'  
you have  
such a le  
anythin  
which u  
my wor  
Ask hin  
through  
shears'  
for mor  
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Back:

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PRB

15 Letter to Veldedeius

Reconstructed text

Column i:

*Chrauttius Veldeio suó fratri  
contubernali antiquo pluri-  
mam salutem  
et rogo te Veldei frater miror  
quod mihi tot tempus nihil  
rescripti a parentibus nos-  
tris si quid audieris aut  
Quot. m in quo numero  
sit et illum a me salutabis  
s uerbis meis et Virilem  
ueterinarium rogabis  
illum ut forficem*

Column ii:

*quam mihi promissit pretio  
mittas per aliquem de nostris  
et rogo te frater Virilis  
salutes a me Thuttenam  
sororem Velbuteium  
rescribas nobis cum ...  
se habeat  
opt<o>sis felicissimus  
uale*

Back:

*Londini  
Veldedeio  
equisioni co(n)s(ularis)  
a Chrauttio  
fratre*

Translation

'Chrauttius to Veldeius his brother and old messmate, very many greetings. And I ask you, brother Veldeius - I am surprised that you have written nothing back to me for such a long time - whether you have heard anything from our elders, or about ... in which unit he is; and greet him from me in my words and Virilis the veterinary doctor. Ask him (Virilis) whether you may send through one of our friends the pair of shears which he promised me in exchange for money. And I ask you, brother Virilis, to greet from me our sister Thuttena. Write back to us how Velbuteius is (?). (2nd hand?) It is my wish that you enjoy the best of fortune. Farewell.'

Back:

(1st hand) '(Deliver) at London. To Veldedeius, groom of the governor, from his brother Chrauttius.'

A complete diptych with double column text written in a large, sprawling script, probably by a scribe, with the closure by Chrauttius himself. As in 11 and 12 the use of the word 'brother' is to be taken as a term of friendship. The mention of a veterinary doctor, one of several medical references in the Vindolanda tablets, is of interest as also are the unusual Celtic and Germanic personal names Velde(de)ius and Chrauttius. Veldedeius may well have been on detachment to the governor in London and on his return to Vindolanda may have brought this letter with the rest of his belongings.

PRB P1988.10-5.66. Tab. Vindol. II,310

16 Letter to Advectus

Translation

'Metto (?) to his Ad greetings. I have seen through the agency; 34; axles for carts, axle turned on the number, 300; planl 26; seats, number, (?); boards (?), number benches (?), number skins, number, 6 (are in good health

This fragmentary business letter, though more than an inventory concluded with a greetings. Both I probably civilian army. Their considerable largely of wood

PRB P1986.10-1.56. Tab.

s brother and old  
tings. And I ask  
m surprised that  
back to me for  
you have heard  
or about ... in  
him from me in  
eterinary doctor.  
you may send  
the pair of  
me in exchange  
rother Virilis, to  
uttena. Write  
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16 Letter to Advectus  
Translation

'Metto (?) to his Advectus (?) very many greetings. I have sent you wooden materials through the agency of Saco: hubs, number, 34; axles for carts, number, 38; therein an axle turned on the lathe, number, 1; spokes, number, 300; planks (?) for a bed, number, 26; seats, number, 8 (?); knots (?), number, 2 (?); boards (?), number, 20+; ..., number, 29; benches (?), number, 6; I have sent you goat-skins, number, 6 (2nd hand) I pray that you are in good health, brother.'

This fragmentary diptych is very much a business letter, the text comprising little more than an inventory preceded and concluded with only the briefest of greetings. Both Metto and Advectus were probably civilian suppliers working for the army. Their consignment referred to here is largely of wooden vehicle fittings.

PRB P1986.10-1.56. *Tab. Vindol. II.309*

17 Letter concerning the transport of  
stone

Reconstructed text

.[  
*quem modum carrulorum  
missurus sis domine  
deliberare tecum debes  
ad lapidem portandum  
Voconti enim centu[  
carrulis uno die la [*

Left margin:  
*nisi rogas Vocontif  
ut lepidem exp[  
non explicabi[  
rogo ut rescri[bas  
quid uelis me [  
opto bene [ualeas*

Translation

'... you ought to decide, my lord, what quantity of wagons you are going to send to carry stone. For the century of Vocontius ... on one day with wagons ... (2nd hand) Unless you ask Vocontius to sort out (?) the stone, he will not sort it out. I ask you to write back what you want me to do (?). I pray that you are in good health.'

Part of the left-hand portion of a diptych. The main text is written in a rather elegant squarish cursive script, with a second text written at right-angles in the margin. A revealing glimpse of military logistics.

PRB P1986.10-1.167. *Tab. Vindol. II.316*

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## Advectus

This Advectus (?) very many have sent you wooden materials agency of Saco: hubs, number, carts, number, 38; therein an on the lathe, number, 1; spokes, planks (?) for a bed, number, nber, 8 (?); knots (?), number, 2 ), number, 20+; ..., number, 29; number, 6; I have sent you goat-er, 6 (2nd hand) I pray that you health, brother.'

itary diptych is very much a er, the text comprising little a inventory preceded and ith only the briefest of th Metto and Advectus were lian suppliers working for the onsignment referred to here is oden vehicle fittings.

Tab. Vindol. II, 309

## 17 Letter concerning the transport of stone

Reconstructed text

.I  
quem modum carrulorum  
missurus sis domine  
deliberare tecum debes  
ad lapidem portandum  
Voconti enim centu[  
carrulis uno die la [

Left margin:

nisi rogas Voconti[  
ut lepidem exp[  
non explicabi[  
rogo ut rescri[bas  
quid uelis me [   
opto bene [ualeas

Translation

'... you ought to decide, my lord, what quantity of wagons you are going to send to carry stone. For the century of Vocontius ... on one day with wagons ... (2nd hand) Unless you ask Vocontius to sort out (?) the stone, he will not sort it out. I ask you to write back what you want me to do (?). I pray that you are in good health.'

Part of the left-hand portion of a diptych. The main text is written in a rather elegant squarish cursive script, with a second text written at right-angles in the margin. A revealing glimpse of military logistics.

PRB P1986.10-1.167. Tab. Vindol. II, 316

## 18 Letter of appeal

Reconstructed text

Column i:

eo magis me ca[  
d ... [.Jem mercem [   
r[.Juel effunder[...r[   
[...mine probo tuam maies-  
[tatem imploro ne patiaris me  
[i]nnocentem uirgis cas[t]igatum  
esse et domine prou[.] prae-  
[fe]cto non potui queri quia ua-  
[let]judini detinebatur  
ques[tu]s sum beneficiario

Column ii:

[... .. cen]turionibu[s]  
[... ..] numeri eius [   
[... tu]am misericord[ia]m  
imploro ne patiaris me  
hominem trasmarinum  
et innocentem de cuius ffide  
inquiras uirgis cruent[at]u[m]  
esse ac si aliquid sceler[is]  
commississem

Translation

'... he beat (?) me all the more ... goods ... pour them down the drain (?). As befits a honest man (?) I implore your majesty not allow me, an innocent man, to have been beaten with rods and, my lord, inasmuch (?) I was unable to complain to the prefect because he was detained by ill-health I complained in vain (?) to the *beneficiarius* and the rest (?) of the centurions of his unit. Accordingly (?) I implore your mercifulness not to allow me, a man from overseas and an innocent one, about whose good faith you may inquire, to have been bloodied by rods as if I had committed crime.'

transport of

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y lord, what  
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ry of Vocontius ...  
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to sort out (?) the  
ut. I ask you to  
me to do (?). I  
health.'

on of a diptych.  
a rather elegant  
th a second text  
he margin. A  
ry logistics.

### 18 Letter of appeal Reconstructed text

Column i:

*eo magis me ca[  
d ... [.]em mercem [ ]  
r[.]uel effunder[...]r[ ]  
[.]mine probo tuam maies-  
[t]atem imploro ne patiaris me  
[i]nnocentem uirgis cas[t]igatum  
esse et domine prou[.] prae-  
[fe]cto non potui queri quia ua-  
[let]udini detinebatur  
ques[tu]s sum beneficiario*

Column ii:

*[...] cen[turion]ibu[s]  
[...] numeri eius [ ]  
[.] tu]am misericord[ia]m  
imploro ne patiaris me  
hominem trasmarinum  
et innocentem de cuius f[ide]  
inquiras uirgis cruent[at]u[m]  
esse ac si aliquid sceler[is]  
commississem*

Translation

'... he beat (?) me all the more ... goods ... or  
pour them down the drain (?). As befits an  
honest man (?) I implore your majesty not to  
allow me, an innocent man, to have been  
beaten with rods and, my lord, inasmuch as  
(?) I was unable to complain to the prefect  
because he was detained by ill-health I have  
complained in vain (?) to the *beneficiarius*  
and the rest (?) of the centurions of his (?)  
unit. Accordingly (?) I implore your  
mercifulness not to allow me, a man from  
overseas and an innocent one, about whose  
good faith you may inquire, to have been  
bloodied by rods as if I had committed some  
crime.'

The second part of a letter draft written on  
the back of a three-leaved tablet, on the  
front of which was an account of wheat.  
The form of address indicates that the  
letter was intended for the governor of the  
province, since the unit commander had  
been unavailable to help. The writer,  
seemingly a civilian, appears to be seeking  
redress for a beating he has received,  
apparently unjustly. This is not surprising,  
since other sources frequently refer to  
arbitrary and severe beatings meted out by  
the military, in particular by centurions,  
and vain attempts to secure justice from  
others in the military hierarchy.

PRB P1989.6-2.73. Tab. Vindol. II,344

19





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19 Letter to the slave of Verecundus  
Reconstructed text

*fabae frensae m(odios) duos  
pultos uiginti  
mala si potes formonsa inueni-  
re centum qua centum aut  
ducenta si ibi • aequo emantur*

Left margin:

*Jrio mulsi si ebr [  
]mus (sextarios) viii muriae [  
]s modium oliuae [  
] no m*

Back:

*Verecundi*

Translation

'... bruised beans, two *modii*, chickens, twenty, a hundred apples, if you can find nice ones, a hundred or two hundred eggs, if they are for sale there at a fair price. ... 8 *sextarii* of fish-sauce ... a *modius* of olives ...'

Back:

'To ... slave (?) of Verecundus.'

Part of the right-hand portion of a diptych, listing a range of foodstuffs. Verecundus was probably the prefect mentioned on three other tablets. The provisions listed here were probably acquired for his household by one of the domestic slaves in his retinue.

PRB P1989.6-2.17. *Tab. Vindol. II,302*

20 Letter to Candidus  
Reconstructed text

Column i:

*S[eu]er[us] Candido suo  
salutem  
souxtum saturnalicium  
(asses) iii aut seks rogo frater  
explices et radices ne mi-  
nus (denarii) s(emissem)*

Column ii:

*uale frater*

Back:

*Candido Genialis  
prae(fecti)  
a Seuero*

*...i seruo*

Translation

'Severus to his Candidus, greetings. Regarding the ... for the Saturnalia, I ask you, brother, to see to them at a price of 4 or six *asses* and radishes to the value of not less than half a *denarius*. Farewell, brother.'

Back:

'To Candidus, slave of Genialis the prefect, from Severus, slave of ...'

This well-preserved diptych has a short letter written from one slave to another. Both their masters were probably prefects. The subject of the letter, provisions for the Saturnalia, is particularly apt since that festival had a special importance for people of servile status.

PRB P1988.10-5.237. *Tab. Vindol. II,301.*

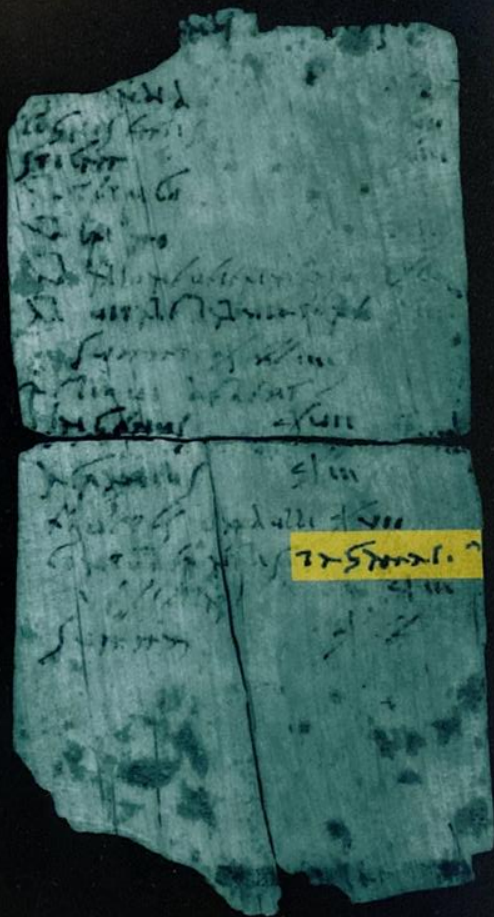
21 Account of money received or owed

This double-leaf tablet (diptych) was found in 2001. It contains an account of cash sums paid or owed by a number of men mainly for lances – the type of spear used by cavalry soldiers. The account is written in three columns. Although some of the writing is damaged several soldiers' names can be read, including Crescens, Exomnius and Tullio.

Near the middle of the second column (just below the largest hole on the left leaf) are two soldiers of particular interest, Tagomas who is labelled *vexellarius* – a standard-bearer – and Victor, who is described as *venator* – a huntsman. The importance of hunting in military life is highlighted at Vindolanda by several tablets which refer to hunting hounds and hunting nets (see one of the tablets on display in Room 70, case 22) as well as to huntsmen.

The unusual name Tagomas is especially interesting because it has been found twice more at Vindolanda, on another cash account tablet (see the photograph on the right) and scratched onto the handle of an amphora. Clearly this was the same soldier, a flag-bearer of a cavalry unit, probably a detachment of the Spanish regiment *cohors I fida Vardullorum equitata*.

PY 2004, 0501.35. Inv. T01-39



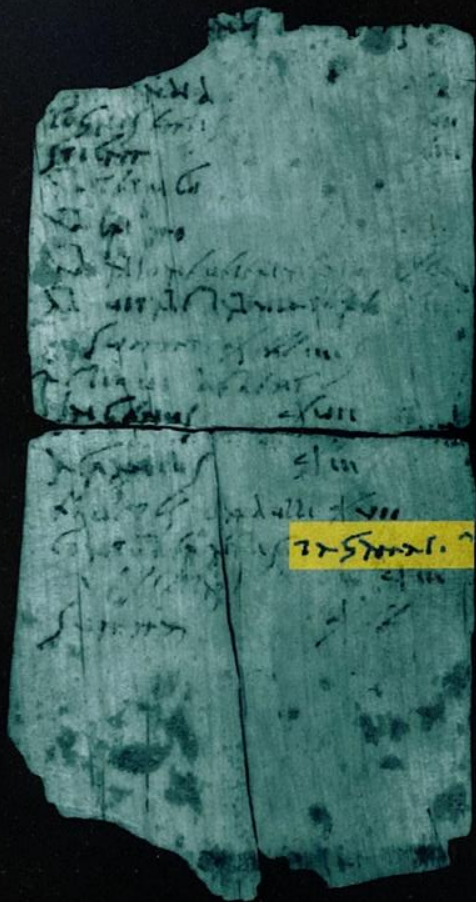
Infra-red photograph of cash account tablet Tab. Vindol. II, 181 (PY 1989,0602.71), with the name Tagamatis highlighted.

ived or owed

(diptych) was found  
account of cash  
number of men  
type of spear used  
account is written  
ough some of the  
eral soldiers' names  
Crescens, Exomnius

second column (just  
n the left leaf) are  
r interest,  
l *vexellarius* – a  
ictor, who is  
huntsman. The  
ilitary life is  
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, on another cash  
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the handle of an  
s the same  
avalry unit,  
the Spanish  
*dullorum*



Infra-red photograph of cash account tablet  
Tab. Vindol. II, 181 (PY 1989,0602.71), with  
the name Tagamatis highlighted.

### Further information

The translations and reconstructed texts used here are by Dr A. K. Bowman and Dr J.D. Thomas. For their full publication of the Vindolanda Tablets see A.K. Bowman and J.D. Thomas *The Vindolanda Writing-Tablets* Volumes II and III (British Museum Press 1994 and 2003). For a more popular account see A.K. Bowman *Life and Letters on the Roman Frontier* (British Museum Press 2003). For young people see Barbara Bell *Minimus: starting out in Latin* (Cambridge University Press 2004).

Vindolanda Tablets Online

<http://vindolanda.csad.ox.ac.uk>

Vindolanda fort online information

<http://www.vindolanda.com>

Visitors may wish to go to Gallery 70  
(Rome and the Roman Empire) to see more  
Vindolanda Tablets on display in case 22.

The purchase of the Vindolanda Tablets  
was assisted by a generous grant from the  
National Heritage Memorial Fund.

NATIONAL  
HERITAGE  
MEMORIAL  
FUND



# THE VINDOLANDA INK WRITING-TABLETS

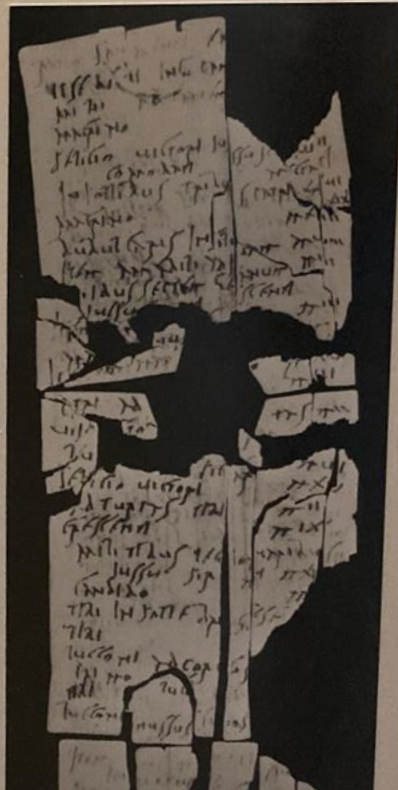
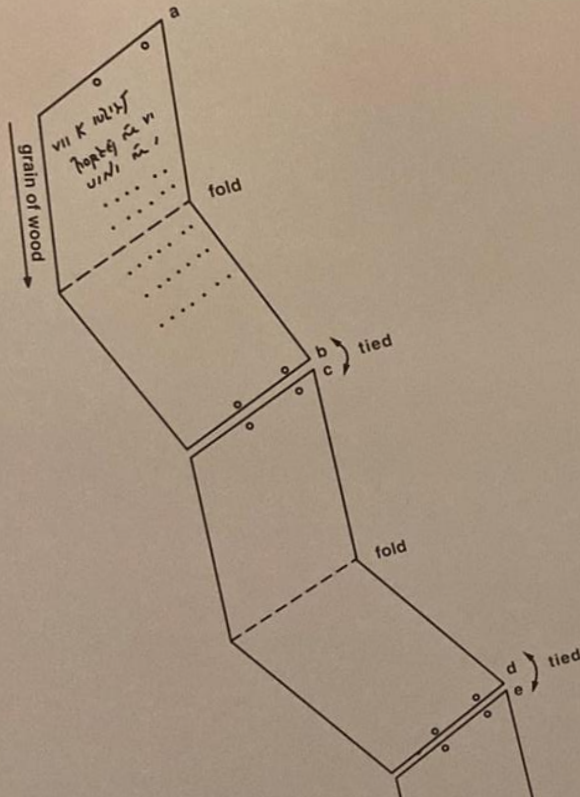
Apart from their fascinating content the Vindolanda tablets are important for two other reasons. First, there is a great variety of individual handwriting, numbering several hundred different hands, which greatly adds to our knowledge of the development of Roman cursive writing in the period around AD 100.

Second, the majority of the tablets are not of the wax type made to be incised with a metal stylus, which were previously thought to be the commonest medium for writing in the Roman world, apart from papyrus. The Vindolanda leaf tablets are wafer thin slices of wood (mainly birch and alder), the writing done with carbon ink and quill-type pens. Most of the larger tablets are roughly the size of a postcard, while the smallest ones are about half that size.

The letters were generally written with the broad dimension of the leaf running horizontally and the text set out in two columns, the first at the left, the second at the right. After completing the letter the

the larger tablets are roughly the size of a postcard, while the smallest ones are about half that size.

The letters were generally written with the broad dimension of the leaf running horizontally and the text set out in two columns, the first at the left, the second at the right. After completing the letter the writer scored it vertically down the centre, folded it, and wrote the address on the back of the right hand half. Some tablets had notches cut into the edge so that they could be tied together.

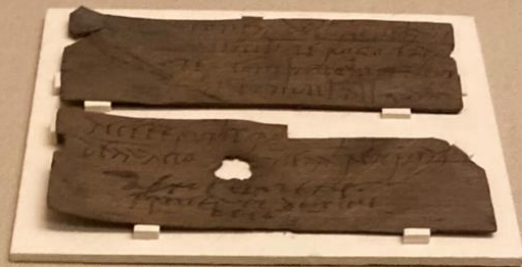


# LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

The Roman Empire united many different cultures and peoples through trade, military service or the administration of government. Even in the forts and towns of a distant province like Britain you might hear Greek, Hebrew, Palmyrene or Coptic spoken. Greeks, Jews, Syrians, Egyptians and north Africans could rub shoulders with Britons, Gauls and Germans. However, Latin was the language of Roman society in the western provinces of the Empire. It is impossible to tell how many people in Britain were literate in Latin, but contact with the administrative and judicial systems would give many a basic knowledge of the spoken language even if they did not read or write.

The archaeological evidence for literacy is very varied. Ink pots, pens, and styli (for writing on wax tablets) give some idea of its spread. Inscriptions on tombstones, altars and dedicatory slabs shed light on careers, lifespans, religious, military and administrative matters. An insight into personal life is given by the texts on wooden writing-tablets, particularly those from Vindolanda, while a few surviving inscriptions on wallplaster or mosaics reveal an acquaintance with Latin literature. Inscriptions on metal range from military discharge certificates to religious plaques. Scratched graffiti were an everyday form of writing and have survived especially well on tiles and pottery.





### **Ink writing-tablet**

Late 1st-early 2nd century AD  
Vindolanda (Chesterholm),  
Northumberland

A thin wooden diptych containing the lower part of two columns of a letter, in cursive script. It was sent to one unit commander (prefect) from another and concerns the movement of military personnel. The letter was written by a scribe, but the closure is in the author's own hand. The text is notable for its use of punctuation (interpunct), usually lacking in cursive texts.

### **Reconstructed text:**

*i*

.....  
[pe]r A[t-  
tonem • decurionem •  
misi tibi • te • rogo • fra-  
ter • continuo • illos • expun-  
gas et • nulli • ali • quam

*ii*

.....  
].r.[  
acceperunt rogo.[.]..[  
dem • Attonem • remittas  
bene • ualeas •  
frater • et • domine  
opto



### Translation:

'... I have sent you ... through (?) Atto the decurion, I ask, brother, that you immediately strike them off the list. And no others ... have received. I ask that you send the same (?) Atto back to me. (2nd hand) It is my wish that you enjoy good health, my brother and lord. (Back, 1st hand) to ... prefect, from Celonius Iustus, his colleague.'

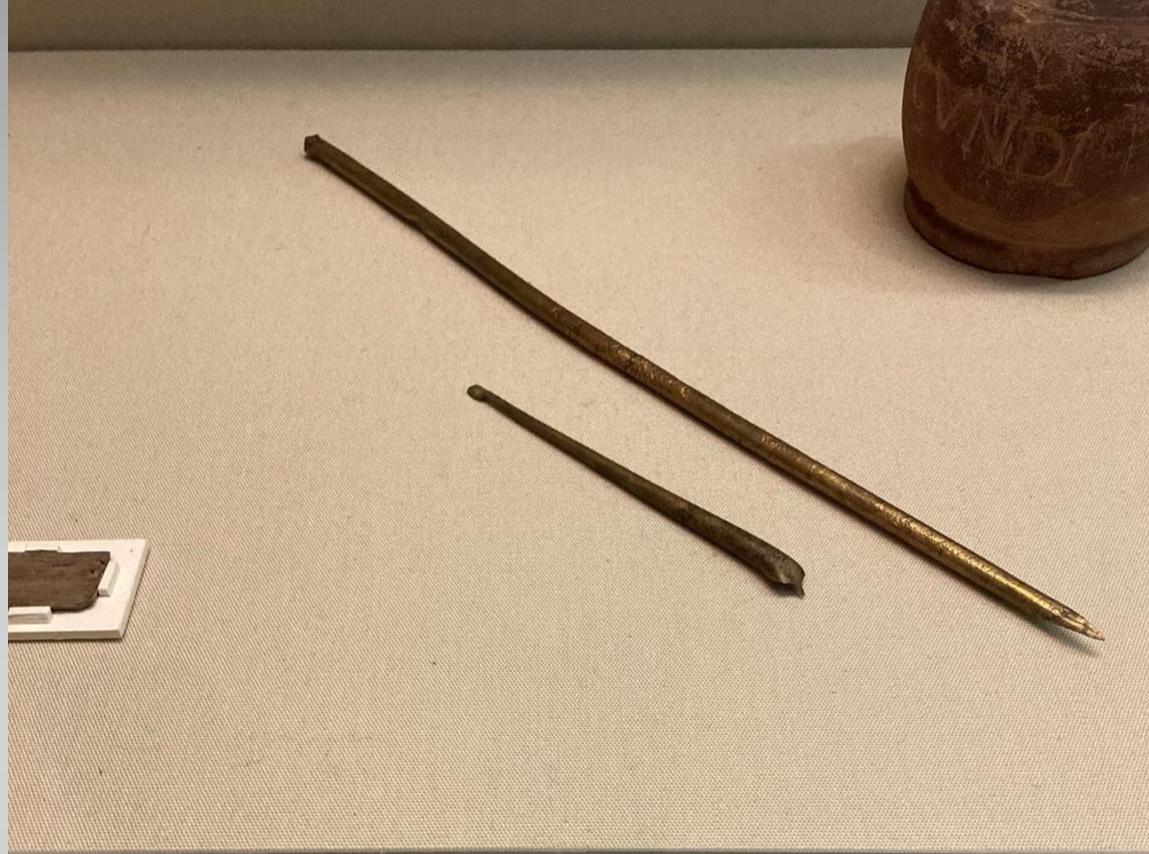
PRB 1989.6-2.76. *Tab. Vindol. II, 345*

### Ink writing-tablet

Late 1st-early 2nd century  
Vindolanda (Chesterholm)  
Northumberland

This fragment, broken at the bottom, has writing on both sides. On one there is part of a line from the *Aeneid* (IX, 473), probably written out as a writing exercise by the children of Flavius Caelius, commander of the Ninth Cohort at Vindolanda in





**Ink writing-tablet**

Late 1st-early 2nd century AD  
Vindolanda (Chesterholm),  
Northumberland

This fragment, broken at top and bottom, has writing on both sides. On one there is part of a draft letter; on the other a line from Virgil's *Aeneid* (IX,473), probably copied out as a writing exercise, perhaps by the children of Flavius Cerealis, commander of the Ninth Batavian Cohort at Vindolanda in the period c. AD 97-103. Virgil was widely used for elementary instruction.

**Text:**

.....  
*INTEREA PAVIDAM VOLITANS  
PINNA|TA . VBEM seg.*

**Intended text:**

*interea pavidam uolitans pinnata per  
urbem*

PRB P1986.10-1.128. *Tab. Vindol. II,118.*



**Text:**

.....  
*INTEREA PAVIDAM VOLITANS  
PINNA/TA . VBEM seg.*  
.....

**Intended text:**

*interea pavidam uolitans pinnata per  
urbem*

PRB P1986.10-1.128. *Tab. Vindol. II, 118.*

**Bronze pens**

London

Split-nib pens were used with carbon ink to write on papyrus, parchment or wooden leaf tablets of the type found at Vindolanda. More common than these bronze examples would have been those of reed, quill, bone or ivory.

PRB DR.1-33

Placed on permanent loan by F.G. d'Aquila, Esq.

PRB 1865.12-20.21

Given by Sir A.W. Franks



**Bronze pens**  
London

Reed-nib pens were used with carbon ink to write on papyrus, parchment or wooden leaf tablets of the type found at Vindolanda. More common than these bronze examples would have been those of reed, quill, bone or ivory.

PRB 1856.7.1.1226

Acquired on permanent loan by E.G. d'Aquila, Esq.

Date: 1865.12.20.21

Donated by Sir A.W. Franks

**Pottery ink-well**  
Cannon Street, London

Inscribed with the owner's name, Lucundus. These were a common form in Gaulish samian ware; this is an example in coarse ware. The ink was made up using one part of gum-water to three parts carbon black.

**Top of bronze ink-well**  
London

Some bronze ink-wells were very lavishly decorated. The top of this one is inlaid with coloured metals.

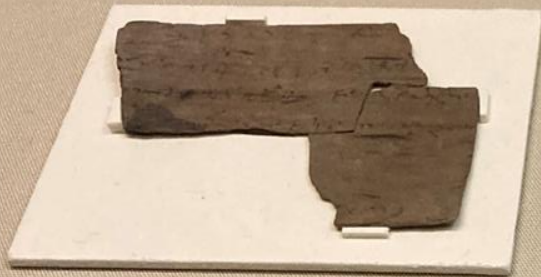
PRB 1950.2-6.1 (Given by L.J.E. Hooper, Esq.);

PRB 1856.7.1.1226

**Ink writing-tablet**  
Late 1st-early 2nd century AD  
Vindolanda (Roman Fort on the Northumberland coast)

One of several fragments of a wooden leaf tablet from Vindolanda. The text on the tablet can be written in a cursive hand, which is a combination of Roman and British shorthand. Shorthand is also used in the Roman script of the mid-1st century AD. This one preserves the beginning of a letter 'S'.

PRB P1986.10-1.167



### **ink-well**

reet, London

with the owner's name,  
These were a common form  
samian ware; this is an  
coarse ware. The ink was  
ing one part of gum-water  
rts carbon black.

### **nze ink-well**

ze ink-wells were very  
decorated. The top of this one  
th coloured metals.

iven by L.J.E. Hooper, Esq.);

### **Ink writing-tablet**

Late 1st-early 2nd century AD  
Vindolanda (Chesterholm),  
Northumberland

One of several ink writing tablets  
from Vindolanda which appear to  
be written in shorthand, using a  
combination of letters and symbols.  
Shorthand is known to have been  
used in the Roman World by at least  
the mid-1st century AD, but details  
of the systems used remain unknown  
and none of the Vindolanda  
shorthand texts have been read.  
This one preserves four lines of text.

PRB P1986.10-1.167. *Tab. Vindol.* II, 122.

### **Ink writing-tablet**

Late 1st-early 2nd  
Vindolanda (Ches  
Northumberland

This letter, written  
on a diptych, was s  
Sollemnis to his br  
was at Vindolanda  
Cohort of Bataviar  
to find a Greek-nar  
far north in Britain  
the letter as it surv  
prosaic, but the sty  
the competent, care  
squarish cursive sc



### **Ink writing-tablet**

Late 1st-early 2nd century AD  
Vindolanda (Chesterholm),  
Northumberland

This letter, written in two columns on a diptych, was sent by a certain Sollemnis to his brother Paris, who was at Vindolanda with the Third Cohort of Batavians. It is interesting to find a Greek-named individual so far north in Britain. The content of the letter as it survives is rather prosaic, but the style of the Latin and the competent, carefully spaced squarish cursive script are notable.

### **Translation:**

'Sollemnis to Paris his brother, very many greetings. I want you to know that I am in very good health, as I hope you are in turn, you neglectful man, who have sent me not even one letter. But I think that I am behaving in a more considerate fashion in writing to you... to you, brother,...my messmate. Greet from me Diligens and Cogitatus and Corinthus and I ask that you send me the names... Farewell, dearest brother (?). (Back, 1st hand) To Paris... of the 3rd Cohort of Batavians, from Sollemnis....'



**Painted wall plaster with Virgilian reference**

1st-2nd century AD, Otford, Kent

Part of an inscribed frieze of scenes from Virgil's *Aeneid* which decorated a corridor at the villa. The incomplete painted inscription (*dipinto*) reads *BINA MANVL...* ('Two [spears] in hand...'); and the associated fragment shows a figure with a spear. The reference is to one of two passages in the *Aeneid*, Aeneas exploring the land around Carthage, or Turnus in his chariot confronting Aeneas. (i, 313, or xii, 165).

Given by B.W. Pearce, Esq. PRB 1928.10-11.1.2.

**Bronze brush handle**

1st-2nd century AD  
London Wall

The double-ended holder for a scribe's or artist's brush. The hairs would have been held in the two crimped ends, one a slender round shape, the other of broader 'stepped' form.

PRB 1883.5-2.8

**Six stili**

1st-2nd c  
London

Stili were surfaced with metal. Those of bronze were decorated with other metals. These types were made by a maker 'Made by' PRB 1834.12.1



#### Six stili

1st-2nd century AD  
London, various sites

Stili were used to write on wax-surfaced wooden writing tablets. Those of wood and bone must have been common, but few have survived. These typical examples of iron or bronze or a combination of the two metals have a writing point at one end, a wedge-shaped eraser at the other and a slender, often finely-decorated stem. One iron stili has a maker's stamp, *REGN F* - 'Made by Regnus'.

PRB 1934.12-10.78 (Given by the Christy Trustees); 1934.11-6.3 (Given by C. Davies); 1856.7.1.1223; 1863.12-11.8.9; 1951.10-5.5

#### Wooden stili-tablet

1st-2nd century AD  
Walbrook, London

Part of a fir wood writing tablet with *LONDINIO* ('At London. To...') on the outer face. The letter has been translated: 'Rufus, son of Callisunus, greetings to Epillicus and all his fellows. I believe you know that I am very well. If you have made the list, please send it. See that you do everything carefully so as to extract the last coin from that girl...'. The mixture of Roman and Celtic-sounding names is interesting.

Given by Professor Sir Ian Richmond  
PRB 1963.10-2.1

#### Bronze mil

AD 145/146  
Chesters, N

Fragments of a military diploma during excavation of the eastern gateway of the Roman legionary fortress at Chester. The diploma was conferred by Emperor Antoninus Pius on a soldier who had completed his military service. His name is inscribed on the tablet.

Given by John Clayton  
PRB 1880.7.7.2



**Bronze military 'diploma'**  
AD 124  
Stannington, Yorkshire

The one surviving plate of a two-piece bronze discharge certificate found by a ploughman in 1760. On the outer face are the names of the witnesses who vouchsafed the accuracy of the record, which was issued in the reign of Hadrian. The inscribed text on the inner (displayed) face has been done very carelessly with ill-formed letters, a common feature of second-century diplomas.

Given by Thomas Yonge, Esq.  
PRB 1857.11-27.1

**Bronze dedicatory plaque**  
3rd century AD  
Colchester, Essex

This inscription has been punched onto a bronze plaque of traditional 'ansate' form (*tabula ansata*). The dedication is made to the god Mars, conflated with an unknown British deity, Medocius. The man who made the dedication at Colchester, Lossio Veda, was evidently a visitor or immigrant, for he proclaimed his northern Scottish origins. If he was a Pict, his descent would have been reckoned matriarchally, in contrast to

the Roman system, and Vepogenus would have been his mother's brother.

The inscription reads: *DEO. MARTI.MEDOCIO.CAMP/ESIUM. ET VICTORIE ALEXAN|DRI.PII FELICIS.AVG.VSTI.NOS(TR)I/ DONVM.LOSSIO.VEDA.DESVO/ POSVIT.NEPOS.VEPOGENI. CALEDO*, which translates 'To the god Mars Medocius of the Campes and to the Victory of our Emperor Alexander Pius Felix, Lossio Veda, grandson of Vepogenus, a Caledonian, set up this gift from his own resources'.

Given by Sir A.W. Franks  
PRB 1892.4-21.1

**Bronze military 'diploma'**  
AD 124  
Stannington, Yorkshire

The one surviving plate of a two-piece bronze discharge certificate found by a ploughman in 1760. On the outer face are the names of the witnesses who vouchsafed the accuracy of the

**Bronze dedicatory plaque**  
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found





**Inscribed lead sheet ('curse tablet')**  
2nd to 4th century AD  
Uley, Gloucestershire

Lead sheet is easily inscribed with a stylus or other sharp point and it was commonly used for the manufacture of the so-called curses dedicated at some Romano-British shrines. The texts generally sought to enlist the help of the god(s) in restoring stolen property or in inflicting harm on wrongdoers. The curses were sometimes given extra 'power' by reversing the text or by nailing them to a wall.

At Uley 'curses' were generally rolled up, and this one has been unrolled to reveal the text, which was well-inscribed in 'rustic capitals'. It has been translated 'Biccus gives Mercury whatever he has lost (that the thief), whether man or male (*sic*) may not urinate nor defecate nor speak nor sleep nor stay awake nor (have) well-being or health, unless he bring (it) in the temple of Mercury; nor gain consciousness (*sic*) of (it) unless with my intervention.'

Given by Major and Mrs C.A. Goldingham  
PRB P1978.1-2. (Inv.5050)

**Inscribed lead**  
2nd to 4th cen  
Uley, Glouces

Lead sheet is  
stylus or other  
commonly us

the so-called curses dedicated at some

which are



**Samian bowl with graffiti**  
Ospringe, Kent

The graffiti, inscribed around the underside of the vessel, read *LVCIVS LUCIANVS (I)VLI DIANTVS VICTOR VICTORICUS VICTORINA VAS COMMUNIS*.

It seems that the bowl was a communal vessel, and the named individuals may have been members of a guild. Guilds were clubs or societies, especially of craftsmen, that sought to protect the interests of their members. Part of the social aspect involved dining together.

Given by the Society of Antiquaries of London  
PRB 1925.5-2.13



raffiti

### Two British coins 10BC-AD10

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Silver and bronze coin issues of an otherwise unattested and short-lived tribal leader whose name was, or began, *ANDOCO*. The inscription is shown on the reverse of the silver coin, where it starts below the Pegasus and extends round to the right. On the bronze coin it encircles the right side of the face. The Andoco-coins have been found within territory conventionally attributed to the Catuvellauni tribe.

CM 1919.3-13.448; 1991.11-10.236

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### Four bronze seal boxes or lids

The two coloured enamel designs are from London; the lid showing a cockerel is from near Harwich; and the lid with phallic motif is of unknown provenance. Roman letters and documents were tied with string which passed through holes in the seal box. The box was then filled with wax, which was given the impression of the senders seal, and the lid closed to protect the wax. It would then be evident to the addressee if the document had been tampered with.

PRB DR.1-64 (Placed on permanent loan by  
F.G. d'Aquila, Esq.); 1883.5-2.3; 1881.9-9.20  
(Given by Sir A.W. Franks); no number



Four bronze seal boxes or lids  
The two coloured en



The official impressions range from  
the three imperial busts (of Severus,  
Caracalla and Geta) on the South

ge pottery tazza,



### Lead alloy sealings

Two coloured enamel designs are in London; the lid showing a kernel is from near Harwich; and the lid with phallic motif is of unknown provenance. Roman letters and documents were tied with string which passed through holes in the seal box. The box was then filled with wax, which was given the impression of the sender's seal, and the lid closed to protect the wax. It would then be evident to the addressee if the document had been tampered with.

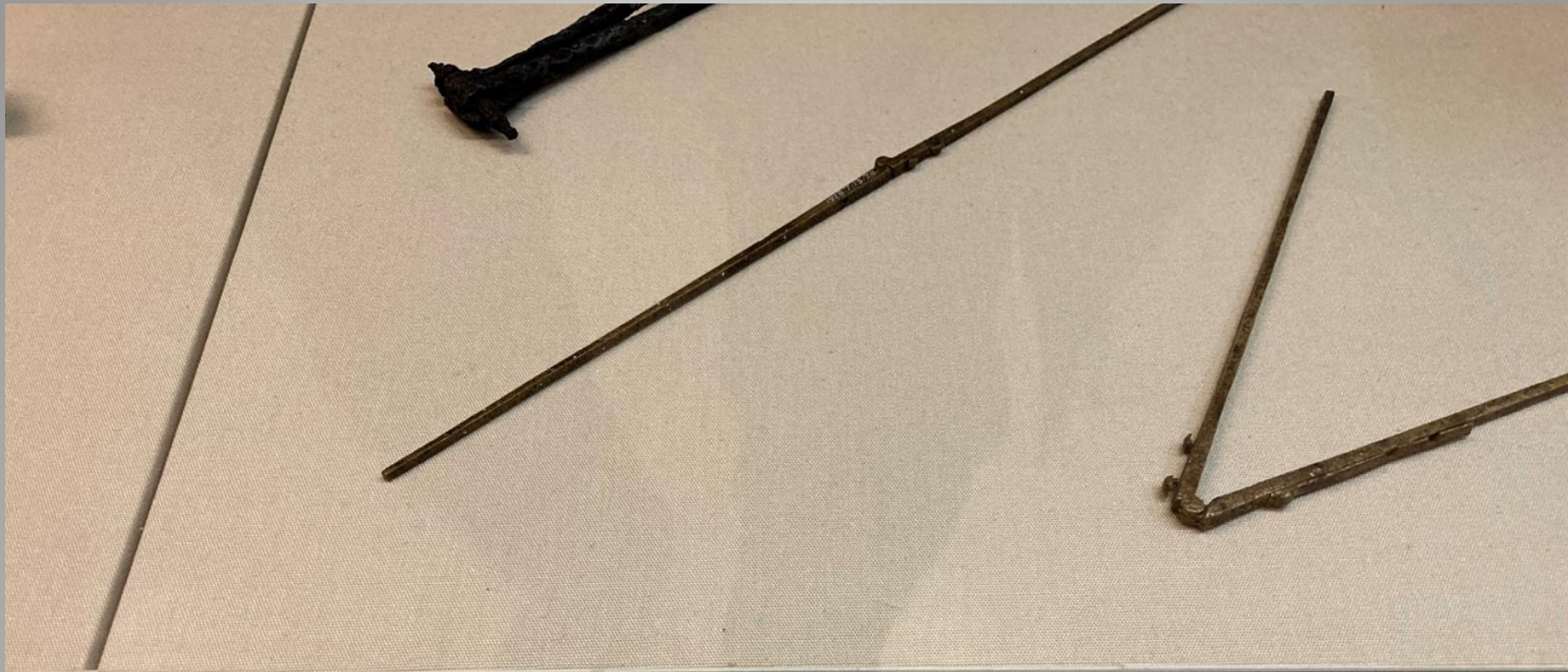
PRB DR.1-64 (Placed on permanent loan by E.G. d'Aquila, Esq.); 1883.5-2.3; 1881.9-9.20 (Given by Sir A.W. Franks); no number

### Lead alloy sealings

These objects occur in large numbers in Britain, usually in military contexts. This is a selection from the large group found at the Roman fort of Brough-under-Stainmore, Cumbria, together with a single example from another group found in the fort at South Shields, Tyne and Wear. These were used to seal bales of merchandise or official stores, and they differ little from modern Customs sealings. Some still retain traces of embedded cord or string.

The official impressions range from the three imperial busts (of Severus, Caracalla and Geta) on the South Shields sealing to legionary and auxiliary unit codes. Represented here are Legion II Augusta, and Cohorts II Nerviorum, V Pannoniorum, VI Raetiorum, and VI and VII Thracum. The South Shields fort was a base for Severus's campaigns into Scotland.

PRB 1860.5-2.1,2 (Given by Benjamin Williams Esq., FSA); 1870.10-13.18; 1871.12-21.2-4 (Given by Rev. William Greenwell); 1874.3-28.21, 79,85,87,91-2; 1874.12-28.99-100,102; 1882.8-30.2 (South Shields. Given by Robert Blair, Esq.); 1902.8-16.34; 1910.4-7.85-6 (Given by J.B. Caldecott, Esq.); eleven, no number.



**Iron dividers**

Colchester, Essex

A precision instrument used by surveyors and a variety of craftsmen.

**Two bronze folding rules**

1st to 2nd century AD

Bank of England, London

These foot-rules are centrally-hinged, one with a catch for keeping it rigid when open. The narrow faces of the rules are subdivided into fractions of one foot: on one face fourths, (*palmi*), on another twelfths (*unciae*) and on the third face sixteenths (*digiti*).

PRB 1570.4-2.459; 1928.7-13.28 (Given by the Governor and Company of the Bank of England); 1951.10-5.1

**Bronze steelyard (*statera*) with lead weights**

1st-2nd century AD

Wallbrook, London

Preserved complete and in perfect condition by waterlogging, the faces of the scale arm retain numbered gradations. As hung here, objects weighing up to eight Roman pounds could be suspended on the double hook and weighed by sliding the weight along the arm. Loads up to 30lbs could be weighed by turning the bar over and hanging the steelyard from the other hook nearer the end of the bar.

PRB 1935.10-28.1

**Iron steelyard**

Probably 4th century AD

Dorn Farm, Gloucestershire

One of a pair of large steelyards which would have been capable of weighing very heavy loads. As is often the case, the bar has two different hanging points (*fulcra*) permitting a wide range over which it could weigh. Corrosion has removed every trace of the incised scale on the arm.

Given by Lieutenant Colonel R.K. Morcom  
PRB 1938.10-8.1

**Bronze plumb-bob**  
Wroxeter, Shropshire

A large example of standard Roman type, used by surveyors and builders to determine true perpendicularity.

PRB 1855.9-7.2

**Four small bronze steelyard weights**  
London

They are in the form of busts, of deities or, perhaps, personifications of the days of the week.

**Bronze steelyard weight**  
Provenance unknown

In the form of a lifelike bust of a boxer with cauliflower ear and the characteristic pigtail hair style adopted by Roman wrestlers and boxers. Weight 1200 g.

PRB 1865.4-8.13-16; 1856.7-1.5091

**Two bronze and lead steelyard weights**

Nursling, Southampton, Hampshire  
Great Chesterford, Essex

Both are busts of frenzied maenads, the female devotees of the god Bacchus, who took part in his ecstatic rituals, which involved music, dancing and wine drinking. Vine or ivy leaves are woven into their hair, and one has silver-inlaid eyes and copper-plated lips. Weights 2361 g.; 2347 g.

PRB 1856.7-1.5090; 1865.4-8.12

**Bronze**  
City

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Weigh

Given by the  
PRB 1934.1



**Lead steelyard**

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Essex  
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which involved  
and wine drinking.  
are woven into  
e has silver-inlaid  
plated lips.  
2347 g.  
8.12

**Bronze and lead steelyard weight**  
City of London

A finely-modelled bust of a bearded and balding man, perhaps intended to represent a philosopher. The lid in the head permitted the filling of the hollow-cast bronze with lead.  
Weight 6,812 g.

Given by the Christy Trustees  
PRB 1934.12-10.1

**Bronze balance beam (*libra*)**  
Probably 1st-2nd century AD  
London

A scale pan was strung from the hook at each end. The beam has a graded scale picked out in inlaid spots of contrasting metal.

PRB 1856.7-1.1279

**Four bronze weights for use with the *libra***

London

PRB 1856.7-1.1289, 1856.7-1.1287, 1286

Chesterton, Cambridgeshire

PRB 1882.6-21.127

All are of the standard Roman cheese-shaped form. From the left, they are weights of one ounce, two ounces (marked II), three ounces and twelve ounces.

**Bronze weight**

River Thames, London

This rectangular three-sided weight is inscribed with the Roman symbol and the figure II.

**Bronze-cased lead weight**  
London

A twelve ounce weight, probably used with a steelyard.

PRB 1862.3-21.3 (Given by Sir A.W. Franks)



**Bronze steelyard (*statera*) with  
lead weights**

1st-2nd century AD  
Walbrook, London

Preserved complete and in perfect condition by waterlogging, the faces of the scale arm retain numbered gradations. As hung here, objects weighing up to eight Roman pounds could be suspended on the double hook and weighed by sliding the weight along the arm. Loads up to 30lbs could be weighed by turning the bar over and hanging the steelyard from the other hook nearer the end of the bar.

PRB 1935.10.28.1



**Bronze plumb-bob**  
Wroxeter, Shropshire

A large example of standard Roman type, used by surveyors and builders to determine true perpendicularity.

PRB 1855.9-7.2





# PERISHABLE MATERIALS

Most organic substances, like wood, leather or cloth, rapidly perish once they are buried, leaving only metal, stone, clay and glass to represent the past. Under special circumstances such as waterlogging, however, they can survive.

Woodworking was well-established in Britain before the Roman conquest, but during the Roman period vast quantities of timber were used, for everything from tent pegs to whole buildings.

Leather came from the hides of cattle, occasionally from goat skins. Hides were exported from Iron Age Britain and production increased under Roman authority. The army alone needed vast quantities for clothing, footwear, tents and equipment. As well as hides and meat animal carcasses provided bone. Like horn and sinew, bone was used for many small items: knife-handles, spoons and gaming counters as well as bangles, rings and, above all, hair pins and dress pins.

Most textiles were made from wool, though flax was also used to make linen. A simple warp-weighted vertical loom could produce a range of cloths. Surviving fragments reveal that plain weave, herringbone twill and diamond twill were known in Roman Britain. According to the price-fixing edict of the Emperor Diocletian of AD 301, items made of British wool were famous for their high quality, notably the *byrrus Britannicus*, a hooded cloak, similar to the modern duffel coat.



A wooden wheel at the bottom of a Roman stave-lined well, in course of excavation at Carlisle. It survived



Three deities - the *Genii Cucullati* - wearing the famous Romano-British woollen hooded cape, the *byrrus Britannicus*. 3rd century AD stone relief found in a shrine at Carlisle.



**Wooden windlass?**  
London

A rectangular block with a rounded tenon at each end and two mortised pegs. Perhaps a well winder.

PRB



**Wooden barrel staves**

1st century AD  
near Mansion House, London

Parts of two wooden staves from a barrel lining at the base of a Roman well. This was undoubtedly a secondary use and the barrel had probably originally served to bring wine to London. One stave incorporates a bung and is branded twice with the inscription *Q VETTI·JCATVLLI* over a second plugged vent, suggesting that the contents were authenticated by one Quintus Vettius Catullus.

The other stave bears two branded stamps of Fuscus Macrinus (*FVSCMAC*) on its inner surface. Macrinus was probably the cooper who made the barrel.

Given by F G d'Aquila, Esq.  
PRB 1961.5-9.2

**Wooden bowl**

Probably Roman  
Throgmorton Street, London

The bowl has been turned on a lathe and was originally provided with a decorative strip, perhaps of leather, below the rim; only the copper rivets survive.

Given by Sir A W Franks  
PRB 1865.12.30.24

**Wooden bobbin**

London, bed of the River Walbrook

The function of this enigmatic object is not known.

Given by the Christy Trustees  
PRB 1934.12.10.95

**Wooden bowl**  
1st-2nd century AD  
News

This object is a Roman wooden bowl, possibly of leather, widely used in the Roman Empire.

Given by J O Franks  
PRB 1865.12.30.24



**Wooden slide key**

Bank of England, London

Slide keys made of iron or bronze are commonly found on Roman sites. This wooden example is a rare survival and serves to remind us just how extensively wood was used.

**Wooden peg**

1st century AD

Walbrook, London

Placed on permanent loan by F.G. d'Aquila, Esq.  
PRB DR.1-68

**Wooden pin**

London



**Wooden writing-tablet**

1st-2nd century AD  
Walbrook, London

Government issue 'stationery': the exterior of this tablet has been branded with a circular official stamp, which reads *PROC AVG DEDERVNT BRIT PROV*, 'The imperial procurators of the province of Britain issued (this)'. Procurators looked after the Emperor's personal interests in each province, such as imperial estates and mines.

**Wooden writing-tablet or tag**

1st-2nd century AD  
Walbrook, London

A very small slender tablet pierced the end. Perhaps a label or tag.

Given by the Christy Trustees  
PRB 1934.12-10.98



tag

pierced at  
tag.

**Bone sword handle and  
scabbard fitting**  
1st-2nd century AD  
London/South Shields,  
Tyne and Wear

PRB 1856.7-1.1298 (sword handle) PRB 1896.1-20.14  
(scabbard fitting)

**Bone belt-buckle**  
Probably Roman, London

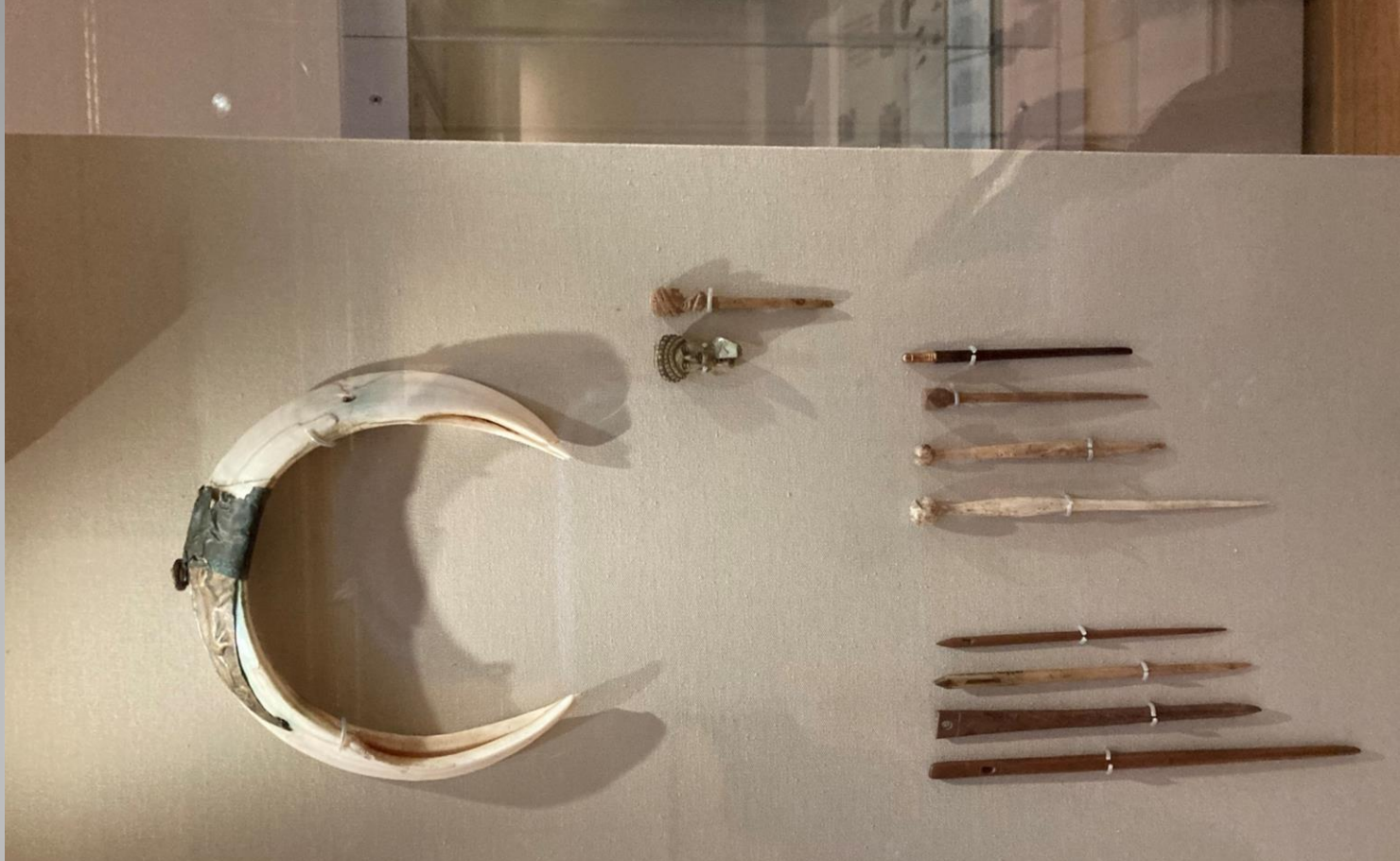
PRB 1856.7-1.1311

**Ivory plaque**  
Greenwich Park, London

A fragment of a sculpted plaque  
found on the site of a Roman villa.  
It depicts a female figure holding a  
shield aloft and may have been part  
of a larger battle trophy scene.

Given by HM First Commissioner of Works  
PRB 1906.2-12.8





**Boar's tusk pendant**  
North Wraxall, Wiltshire

From a Roman villa. Boar's tusks were a tangible and potent reminder of this spirited animal, and they were often made into pendants or amulets. This example comprises a pair of tusks originally secured by three rivetted bronze sheets. On the two surviving sheets is a lightly embossed scene which shows, appropriately, a hunting dog confronting a boar at bay. The missing sheet would probably have shown a second dog.

Given by G Poulett Scrope  
PRB 1861.3-71

**Two ornate bone hairpins, one lacking its stem**  
Probably from Gloucestershire

The terminal of both pins is carved into a female head with elaborate coiffure. Such hairstyles often utilised pins of this kind to support and decorate them.

Given by Sir A W Franks  
PRB 1896.5-1.49,51

**Four bone pins**  
London/Colchester/Essex

Pins were used both to fasten clothing and secure hair. Although cheap and primarily functional, their projecting head was usually worked into a simple decorative form. A rare example here has a finely crafted sheet gold terminal.

PRB 1883.1-12.22 (Given by Sir A. W. Franks); 1934.12-10.20 (Given by the Christy Trustees); 1870.4-2.357, 359

**Four bone needles**  
Colchester, Essex/London

Given by Sir A. W. Franks  
PRB 1883.2.16.6, 7, 9; 1883.1-12.16



**Leather shoe**  
Bank of England, London

A small shoe, probably a child's, with thick hobnailed sole and decorative openwork upper.

Given by the Governor and Company of the  
Bank of England  
PRB 1935.11-6.9.18



### Woven textile

Late 4th century AD  
From a well in the fortlet at Huntcliff,  
Saltburn, Cleveland

These two discoloured fragments are part of one of the largest surviving pieces of woollen cloth from Roman Britain. When found it covered a surface area of at least 900 sq.cm. The weave is an idiosyncratic version of a 2-over-2 twill with weft-chevron pattern.

Given by Sir Mortimer Wheeler, R. Stanton, Esq  
and W. Hornsby, Esq.  
PRB 1933.4-3.1; 1912.6-30.1

Woven textile  
Late 4th century AD



**Shale lion**

Jordan Hill, Weymouth, Dorset

This very stylised lion plaque may have been a decorative element from a piece of furniture.

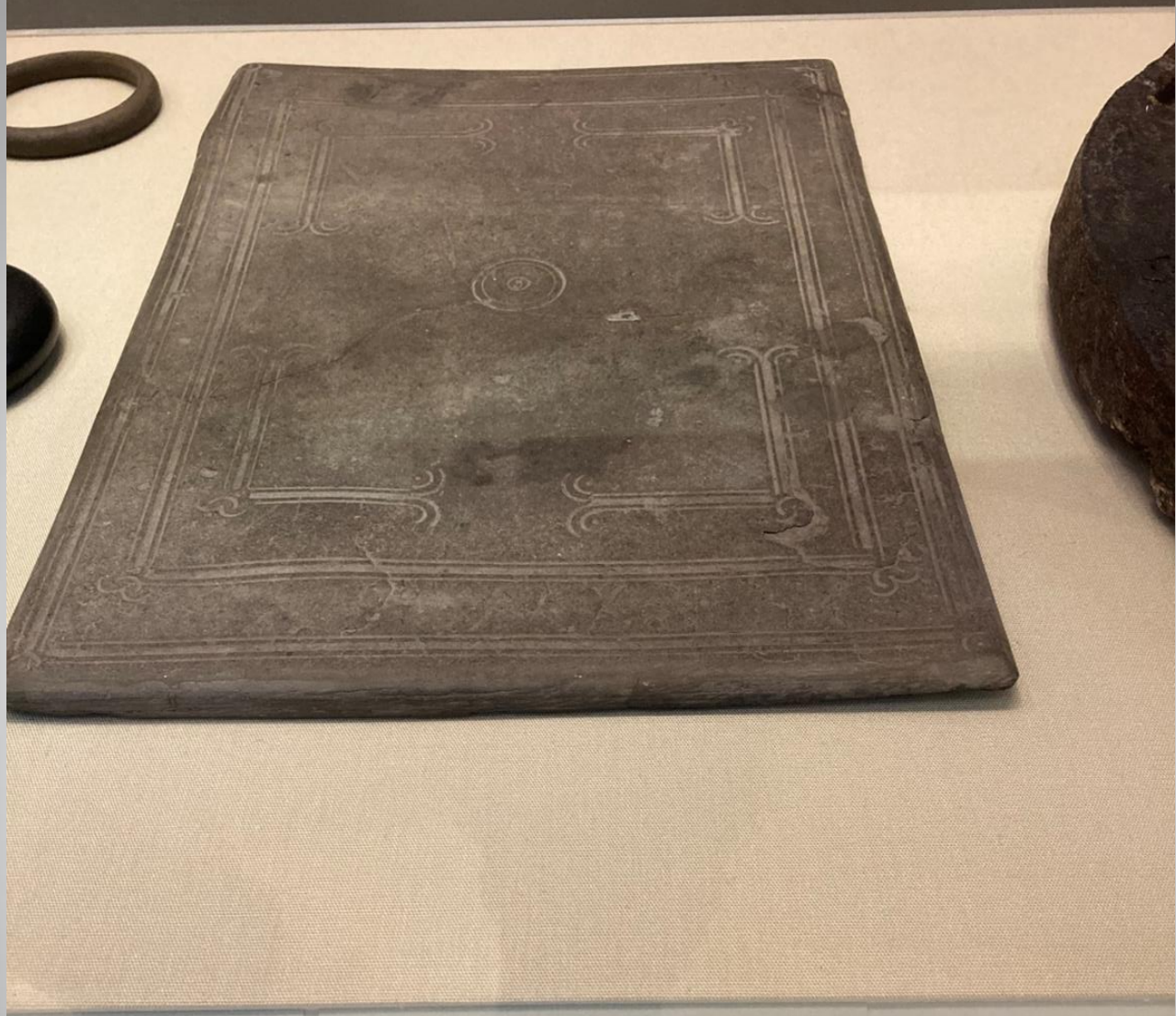
PRB 1892.9-1.1727

**Two jet pendants**

East Runton, Norfolk

These two ring-pendants were found together.

PRB 1926.11-11.1,2.



**Shale tray**

Perhaps late 1st-early 2nd century AD  
Jordan Hill, Weymouth, Dorset

These rather elaborately decorated  
slabs of shale have been found in  
a number of early Roman burials  
associated with eating and drinking  
vessels.

PRB 1879.7-12.2



**Part of a shale table top**  
Westham, East Sussex

Found near the Roman fort at Pevensy. Rather less than one half of the round top of a three-legged table made of Kimmeridge shale. The fragment has been displayed with its underside uppermost to show the mortise for attaching the top of one of the legs. For the appearance of these tables see the panel above.

Given by A E Whichello, Esq.  
PRB P1968.12-9.1

# PREVENTATIVE MEDICINE

The difficulty of restoring the sick to health was keenly appreciated in antiquity. It was therefore important to avoid becoming ill, and medical writers devoted considerable space to discussing preventative measures. Environment, diet, exercise and hygiene all had a part to play in a positive regimen for health, but so, too, did the gods, who were believed to have the power to inflict or ward off disease. There were no barriers between 'science' and 'religion', and the power of divine influence was accepted by patient and doctor alike. In addition to placating various household gods, further protection could be sought from gods with specific healing powers, like Aesculapius.

To judge from archaeological remains, in Britain there existed at least the possibility of a healthy environment and a well-balanced diet. Furthermore, most towns and forts had baths, latrines and a sewage disposal system. Baths were of fundamental importance, and Graeco-Roman medical writers credited them with preventative, restorative and curative powers. Even the simplest town baths of Roman Britain comprised a suite of rooms of graded temperature with strategically-placed hot and cold plunges. Baths were not only places for cleansing, relaxing and socialising. At some establishments you could also take exercise, have a massage, shave or haircut, even receive medical treatment.



Gold plaque  
Wroxeter, Shropshire  
Eye injuries were  
frequent in the Roman  
and this plaque  
two eyes may  
dedicated at  
the hope of  
Oh, look from Lond

Lead curse  
Telegraph St  
The curse, sc  
fragment of a  
curse Tretia  
and mind and  
and lungs mi  
her words, the  
memory; that  
to speak what  
concealed, no  
calling down a  
curse on a nat  
typical of man  
PER 1981.11.6.1



**Bather's flask and strigil carrier**  
2nd century AD  
Bayford, Kent

This bronze handle was used to carry a bather's personal equipment to and from the baths. There would normally be at least one strigil, an oil flask, and a shallow bronze pan.

PRB 1883.12-13.230

**Two strigils of iron and bronze**  
London Wall/Sutton, Berkshire

These were cleansing implements. After perspiring in the hot room of the baths, the bather scraped the moisture and dirt from his skin with a strigil. The end of the bronze example is broken.

Given by Sir A W Franks  
PRB 1883.4.4.13





**Bronze pan**  
Late 1st-early 2nd century AD  
Ribchester, Lancashire

After the cleansing process in the hot room of the baths the bather would use a pan of this kind to splash himself with cold water taken from a basin.

PRB 1814.74.22

**Glass jar**  
London

This is probably a perfume pot. In the bathing process oil could be applied by a friend or slave.

PRB 1806.74.207

**Bronze oil flask**  
2nd century AD



**Glass jar**  
London

This is probably an oil flask or perfume pot. As the final stage of the bathing process perfumes and olive oil could be applied by an attendant, friend or slave.

PRB 1856.7-1.597

**Bronze oil flask**  
2nd century AD, Bayford, Kent

A finely-cast flask decorated with three negroid heads interspersed with bunches of grapes.

PRB 1883.12-13.300

**Bronze oil flask**  
2nd century AD, Borough Hill,  
Aldbrough, North Yorkshire

From the Roman town of *Isurium Brigantum*. This finely-made flask shows a young seated slave asleep with a box or lantern between his legs. He is perhaps waiting to accompany his master home from the baths. A small lid would have completed the head, and the remains of the looped suspension chains can be seen.

PRB Payne Knight Collection

**Bronze figurine of a Lar**  
Lakenheath, Suffolk

Lares were deities whose role was to ensure the well-being of the household.

PRB 1931.11-18.3



**Bronze figurine of Aesculapius**  
Near Chichester, West Sussex

A small figurine showing the paramount healer deity of the classical world. He wears the characteristic traveller's cloak and leans on his most distinctive attribute, the wooden staff, which symbolised his support to the sick. Only traces of the entwined snake, symbol of rejuvenation, can now be seen. This is the first figurine of Aesculapius from Britain.

Given by Mrs P. M. Bergin, in memory of her husband, the late Mr J. A. Bergin, CB; PRB P1995.7-2.1

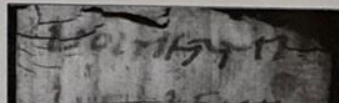


# MEDICAL TREATMENT

In Roman Britain, knowledge of medicinal plants was widespread and sick people might be treated with a herbal remedy by relatives or friends. Or they might visit a healing shrine or the temple-spa complex at Aquae Sulis (Bath), where the hot springs were presided over by Sulis-Minerva. Sometimes, however, a healer or *medicus* would be consulted. Such people usually combined the role of a doctor and a surgeon. There was no formal system of medical training or certification, and neither human anatomy nor the causes of disease were properly understood. Yet, surviving medical texts reveal many positive features in Graeco-Roman health care, in particular in the fields of dietetics, pharmacology and surgery.

For wounds and injuries the *medicus* had a wide range of surgical instruments. Many of these have been found in Britain as have the small stone stamps used to mark eye ointments. These instruments and the operations that were undertaken with them remained the best that were available until relatively recent historical times.

Although most doctors were men, there were some female healers, both doctors and midwives. Normal childbirth was well understood, but any complication was potentially life-threatening, and maternal and infant mortality rates were high.





### Oculists' stamps

Found almost exclusively in the NW provinces of the Empire and used for marking sticks of eye ointment (*collyria*). The dies on the edges bear abbreviated Latin inscriptions engraved in reverse to give a positive impression. They usually give the *collyrium* name, that of its originator or blender and often, indications for use. This meant different eye salves could be stored together. When needed, parts were dissolved in water etc. for application by the healer, who was not necessarily an eye-specialist.

### Samian cup with impression of an oculist's stamp

London

In place of the normal potter's stamp this cup base has been impressed with an oculist's stamp which reads *L.IVL.SENISCOCODADASPR* ('Lucius Iulius Senex's saffron salve for granulation of the eyelids'). It may be that this cup was commissioned for use as a container of that eye ointment.

PRB 1856.7-1.595



### Oculist's stamp

Probably 2nd century AD  
Sandy, Bedfordshire

Marked on two faces with remedies of Gaius Valerius Amandus and on two with those of Gaius Valerius Valentinus: vinegar salve for running eyes; drops for dim sight; celandine (or poppy) salve after the onset of ophthalmia; mixture for clear sight. An abbreviated form of each prescription was scratched on the faces to ensure the correct side of the stamp was used.

Given by J. C. Lucas, FSA; PRB 1882.8-19.1

### Oculists' stamps

1 Kenchester, Herefordshire

Marked on four faces with remedies of Titus Vindacius Ariovistus.

2 St Albans, Hertfordshire

Marked on two faces with remedies of Lucius Iulius Ivenis, re-inscribed on one face with a remedy of Flavius Secundus.

3 Circencester, Gloucestershire

Marked on two faces with remedies of Minervalis.



### Oculists' stamps

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**3** Cirencester, Gloucestershire

Marked on two faces with remedies of Minervalis.

**4** Caistor St Edmund, Norfolk

Marked only with the name Publius Anicius Sedatus.

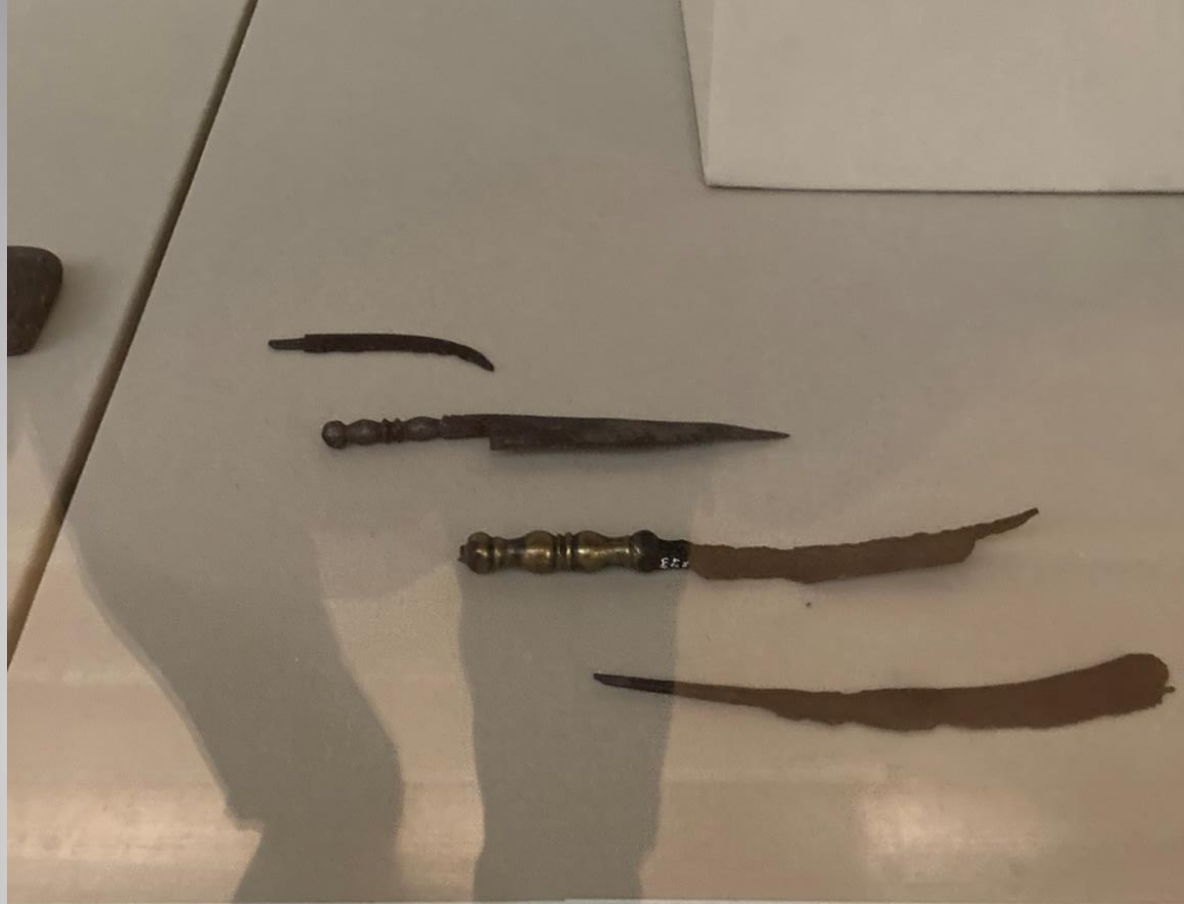
**5** Probably Colchester, Essex

Marked on three faces with remedies of Lucius Ulpus Deciminus.

**6** Goldenbridge, near Clonmel, County Tipperary, Ireland

Marked on one face with a remedy of Marcus Iuventius Tutianus.

PRB 1931.2-11.1; Sloane Collection; 1872.5-20.1; 1928.7-14.3 (Given by H. Hodgkinson, Esq.); 1892.8-1.1 (Given by Sir A.W. Franks); 1864.6-2.1



#### Four iron knives

Probably 1st century AD  
Near Smith's Wharf, London/  
Colchester/London

Roman healers who performed surgery would have had a wide range of cutting instruments at their disposal, almost invariably with iron or steel blades. None of these examples is specific to surgery but all would have been suitable for medical use.

PRB DL1.73.20 (Placed on permanent loan by F.G. d'Aquila, Reg.1.1876.4-2.449, 1877.1-16.11 (Given by Sir A.W. Franks))

#### 1 Three scalpel handles

London/Stonea, Cambridgeshire/  
Eastry, Kent

The most basic Roman surgical kit comprised one or more examples of the following instruments: scalpel, forceps, sharp hook (retractor), needle, probe. Several of these could also be used as heated cauteries. The scalpel was double-ended, with an iron blade and a blunt dissector on the end of the handle. As is usual, the thin iron blade of these has corroded away.

PRB 1865.12-20.20 (Given by Sir A.W. Franks),  
P1865.10.3.14, 1949.6.1.35

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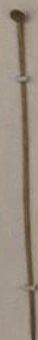
1



2



3



5



4

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PRB 1865.12-20.20 (Given by Sir A.W. Franks);  
P1985.10-3.14; 1949.6-1.35

### 2 Five spring forceps

Provenance unknown/London/  
Little Burstead, Billericay, Essex  
Colchester, Essex

Forceps are a mechanical extension of the surgeon's fingers which provide a secure grip, often in profound parts of the body.

PRB No number; 1896.5-1.18 (Given by Sir A.W. Franks); 1883.5-9.7; P1992.5-3.1 (Given by P.T. Ba Esq.); 1870.4-2.220

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Colchester, Essex

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PRB No number; 1896.5-1.18 (Given by Sir A.W. Franks); 1883.5-9.7; P1992.5-3.1 (Given by P.T. Banks, Esq.); 1870.4-2.220

A variety of different forceps were used by Roman healers. The one with pointed jaws was a splinter forceps also used in fine surgery. The two with inturned smooth jaws were general-purpose dissecting tools also used in the operation to remove ingrowing eyelashes. For a more secure grip fixation forceps with fine interlocking teeth were required. The broken example here would have been used amongst other things for the removal of haemorrhoids. The fifth example was converted in antiquity into a three-pronged fork.

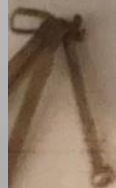
# HYGIENE AND HEALTH

Personal hygiene and care of the body are important for good health and a sense of well-being, and are subjects on which Greek and Roman writers frequently commented.

Toilet implements are very often found together with other personal items in graves. Such finds include glass jars and phials for sweet-smelling ointments and perfumes, mirrors, combs and hairpins but, especially, small toilet kits of bronze or iron, comprising an ear scoop, nail cleaner and tweezers, often held together on a ring.

Small two-piece bronze sets, thought to have been used for applying cosmetics are found only in Britain. The earliest date to the late Iron Age, but the majority were made and used when Britain was a province of Rome. The sets consist of a grooved mortar and a solid rod-like pestle and were evidently used for preparing small quantities of a powdered substance, probably eye shadow or other cosmetics. The sets vary in size and in how elaborate they are, perhaps reflecting the importance of individuality in the selection of such a personal belonging.





### **Bone comb**

London

A typical Roman comb combining sets of coarse and fine teeth.

PRB 1893.6-18.64

### **Metal mirror-plates and handle**

1st-2nd century AD, provenance unknown/Deal, Kent/Colchester, Essex

Though glass mirrors were made, highly polished metal (*speculum*) mirrors remained popular.

PRB POA 3; PRB 1883.10-24.1(Given by Rev. W.L. Lawson; PRB 1870.4-2.247



**Three glass phials and a bronze  
scoop probe**

Colchester, Essex/London

Glass phials of this kind were widely used for cosmetics and medicaments. Slender bronze scoop probes were used to extract and apply the contents.

PRB 1870.4-2.9,10,13; PRB 1856.7-1.1158

**Small glass jar, perhaps an  
ointment pot**

London

Given by Sir A.W. Franks; PRB 1879.7-10.5

**Two bronze scoop probes**

1st-2nd century AD

London

The scoop probe, like the spat probe and ear probe, was a common general purpose implement, which had medical and toilet applications but was not restricted to either. It was sometimes made of bone but more usually of bronze, sometimes finely-decorated.

Placed on permanent loan by F.G. d'Aquila, Esq.  
PRB DR.1-25 and 26



**Mirror and case**  
1st century AD  
Coddenheim, Suffolk

The mirror-cover is decorated with a portrait based on a coin of Nero issued in AD 64-68.

Given by Sir William Maddison  
PGR 1896.3-31.1

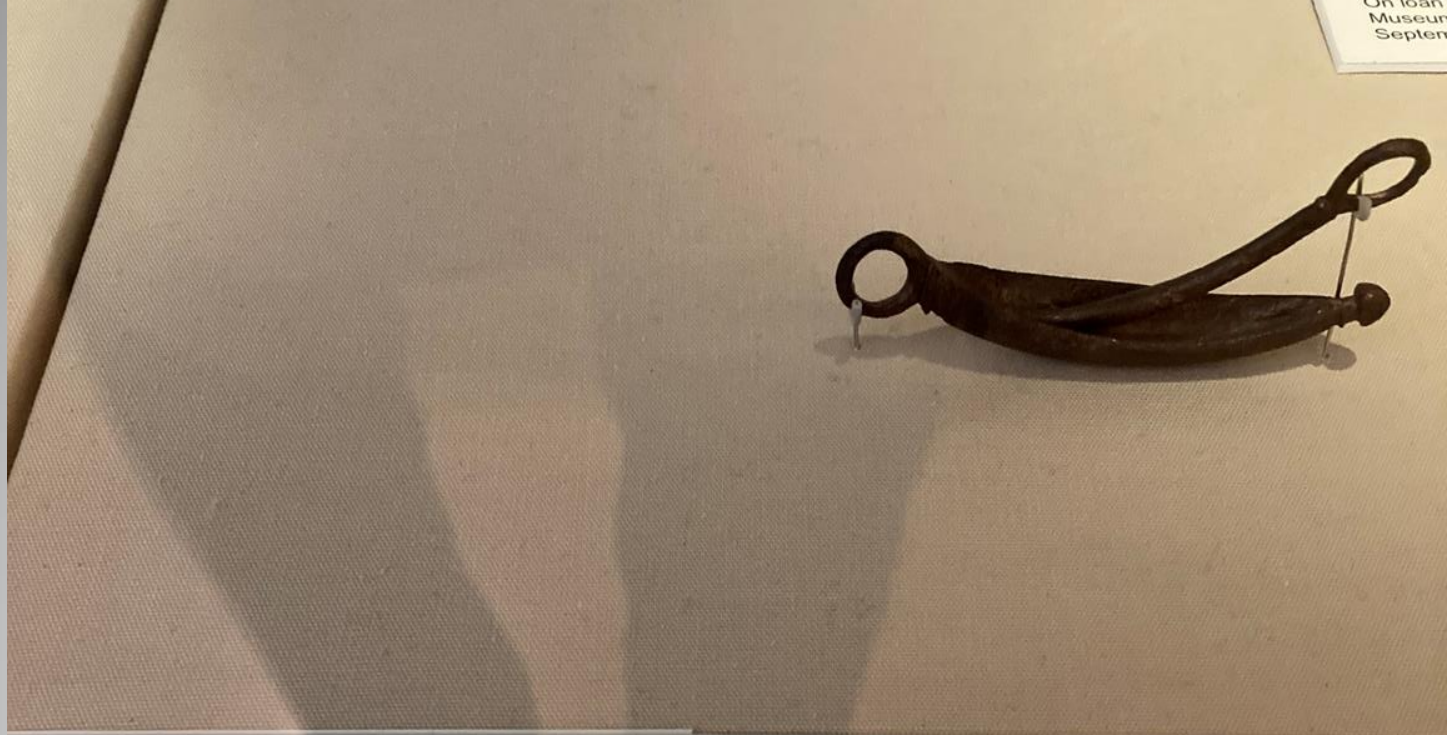
**Cased mirror**  
Colchester, Essex

The tinned reflective surfaces were protected by being nested together. Areas of solder on the outer surfaces show two clasps were originally fitted.

PRB 1870.4.2.232

**Pair of mirrors**  
London

The differing convexity of the tinned inner surfaces would have given different sizes of reflection.



**Cosmetic set**  
AD 40-60  
St Albans, Hertfordshire

Found in a grave with a manicure set and brooch and the cremated remains of an adult, possibly a male, in a pottery flagon. The photo shows a replica of this set in use.

Given by William Old Ltd  
PY 1976,0501.505-6







### Cosmetic grinders

Cosmetic grinders are unique to Britain, where more than 600 have been recorded. They date from the 1st century BC to the 5th century AD, but most belong to the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD when they were widespread and common.

Although they are usually discovered as single objects, they are actually two-piece kits. Over twenty complete sets have been found. They were used for grinding up a small quantity of an unknown substance, probably pigments for

eye shadow or other facial colourings. It is likely, too, that their crescent shape and occasional phallic imagery was believed to give them power as symbols of fertility.

Six sets have been found in graves, but there are also concentrations at temple sites and in towns in south-east England. The sets comprise a solid pestle and a grooved mortar, both of which often show signs of wear.

*Roman Britain*

## Death in Roman London

These three burial urns were found at Warwick Square, London. This was the site of one of Roman London's first cemeteries, established soon after the Roman conquest in AD 43, so these vessels contain the cremated remains of some of the earliest Londoners. Intriguingly, the stone urn may have come from Egypt, which might suggest the person whose remains it contains was of a similarly distant origin.

Under Roman law burial grounds had to be located outside towns. This cemetery was therefore established to the west of Roman London (Londinium). Its location in today's city is just east of the Old Bailey. The cemetery was abandoned by about AD 200 as by that time London had expanded and the site lay just inside the circuit of the town wall.



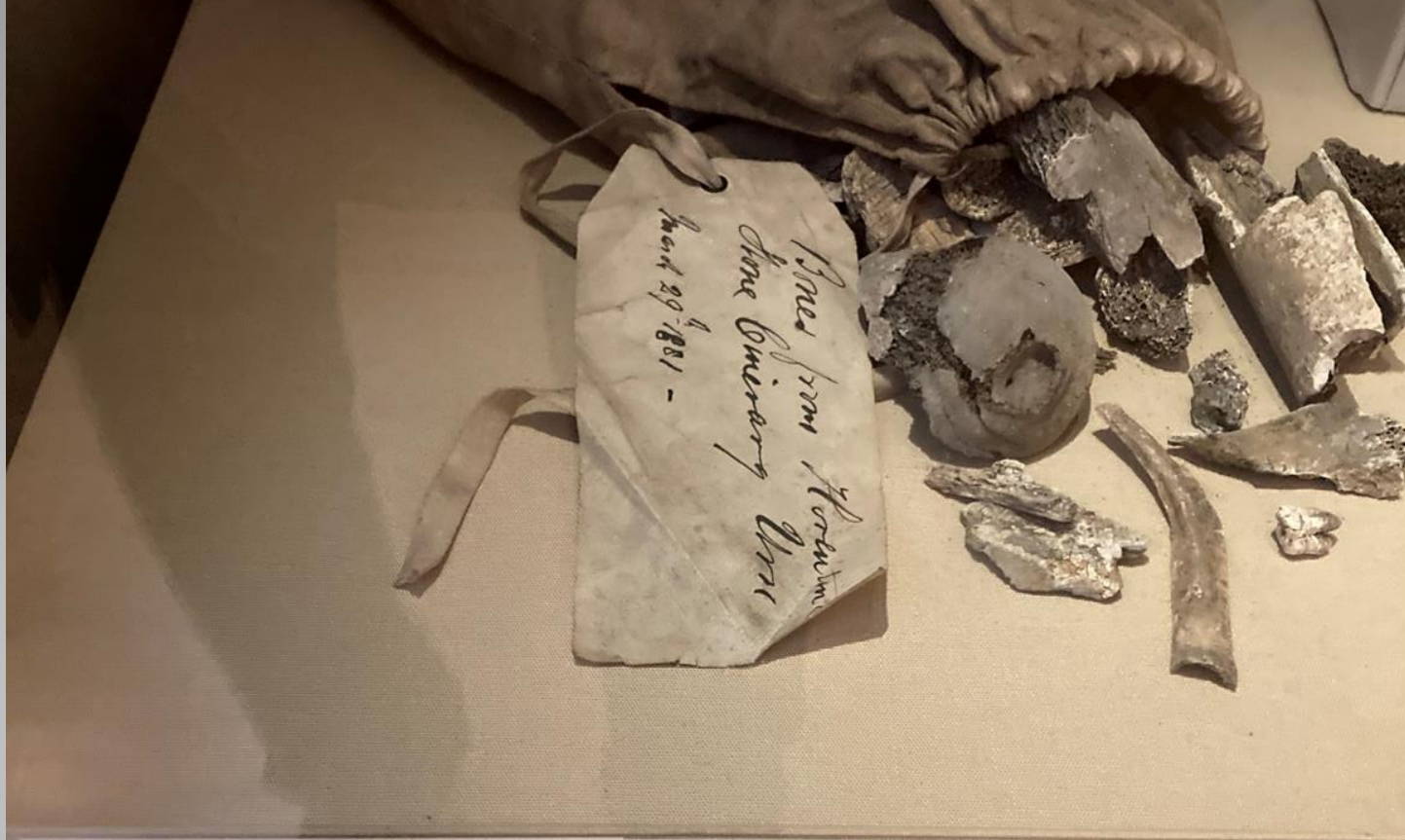
Early Roman London (Londinium) as it may have appeared from the north-west. The heart of the settlement was a core of gridded streets. There was a further settlement to the west, shown in the foreground, and a smaller settlement on the south bank of the Thames at Southwark. ©Peter Frost.



**Stone urn, 1st century AD**  
Warwick Square, London

This high-quality urn is made of basalt from Egypt and contained the bones of an adult man. Burial in this fine, exotic vessel demonstrates the wealth of the deceased or his family, and it is possible that they also came from outside of Britain. The burial is closely dated by a coin of Claudius (AD41-54), displayed above.

Deposited by Mr. A & Mr. W. Tylor in 1882  
MS. 1000. 0100. 12



**Cremated bone from stone urn**  
Warwick Square, London

The bones are from one individual, probably male and about 30 years old. Their size and shape show that he was tall and muscular, with particularly strong legs. Good preservation suggests that, after cremation they were left to cool on the pyre before being carefully collected by hand and deposited in the urn.

Deposited by Mr. A & Mr. W. Tylor in 1882  
P&E 1993.0102.12

**Coin, minted in Rome AD 41-50**  
Warwick Square, London

A bronze *as* of the Emperor Claudius (AD 41-54) was found in the stone urn (above). The coin was fairly new when deposited, making the deceased one of the first Londoners. Coins were often buried in graves in the belief that the dead must pay Charon, the Ferryman of the River Styx, for passage to the Underworld.

Deposited by Mr. A & Mr. W. Tylor in 1882  
C&M R.5074



Found from House  
Stone Urn  
found 29-1881

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C&M R.5074



Illustration of the coin of Claudius found in the stone urn. The reverse side depicts an image of the Roman goddess Minerva.

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Lead canister, 1st century AD  
Warwick Square, London

This lead canister (*ossuarium*), one of three found at Warwick Square, was made to protect the glass urn of cremated bones (left). Plaques around the centre repeat the image of Sol, the Roman sun god, driving his four-horsed chariot. A hole in the lid may have held a pipe so that mourners could pour in libations.

Exposited by Mr. A & W. Tyler in 1882  
P&L 1979/1102.18

## *Roman Britain*

### **A child's burial in Roman Godmanchester**

In 1991 Mr Gerald Reeve found this grave group while digging garage foundations at his home in Godmanchester, a village midway between Cambridge and Peterborough. In the Roman period the place was called Durovigutum, a small town on the busy road from London to York. The burial is that of a child, probably a girl about eight years of age. It dates to the middle of the 2nd century AD and, unusually, lay inside the town boundary.

Part of the burial rite can be visualised because of the care with which Mr and Mrs Reeve excavated and recorded their find. The child had been cremated, and some of the burnt bones were placed in the samian vase with the figure of the bull and horse carefully positioned on either side. These were important sacrificial animals and the models may have been intended to give divine protection and status to the child in the afterlife. Two bracelets were buried with her together with three other pots which probably held food and drink offerings from her bereaved family.



Mrs Dorothy Reeve's photograph of her husband, Gerald, carefully excavating the child's grave in 1991.



#### Child's grave group

Mid-2nd century AD

Godmanchester, Cambridgeshire

This grave group comprises the cremated remains of a child in a samian beaker, flanked by pipe-clay figurines of a bull and a horse, together with three other pots, two bracelets and two metal fittings.

It was found in a round pit about half a metre wide and about one metre below ground level, by Mr G. Reeve while digging garage

footings at his home in the centre of Roman Godmanchester in 1991.

With its combination of local British pottery and imported figurines and samian beaker the grave group is very different to the many others found around Roman Godmanchester.

The only other comparable find comes from nearby Arrington. Both burials may have been influenced by Gallo-Belgic traditions.





**Mosaic from Abbots Ann**  
4th century AD  
Abbots Ann, Hampshire

The Roman villa at Abbots Ann, near Andover, was discovered in the early 1850s. The portions of mosaic floors uncovered were in a bold and simple style, using large tesserae in a limited range of colours, but following traditional Roman geometric designs.

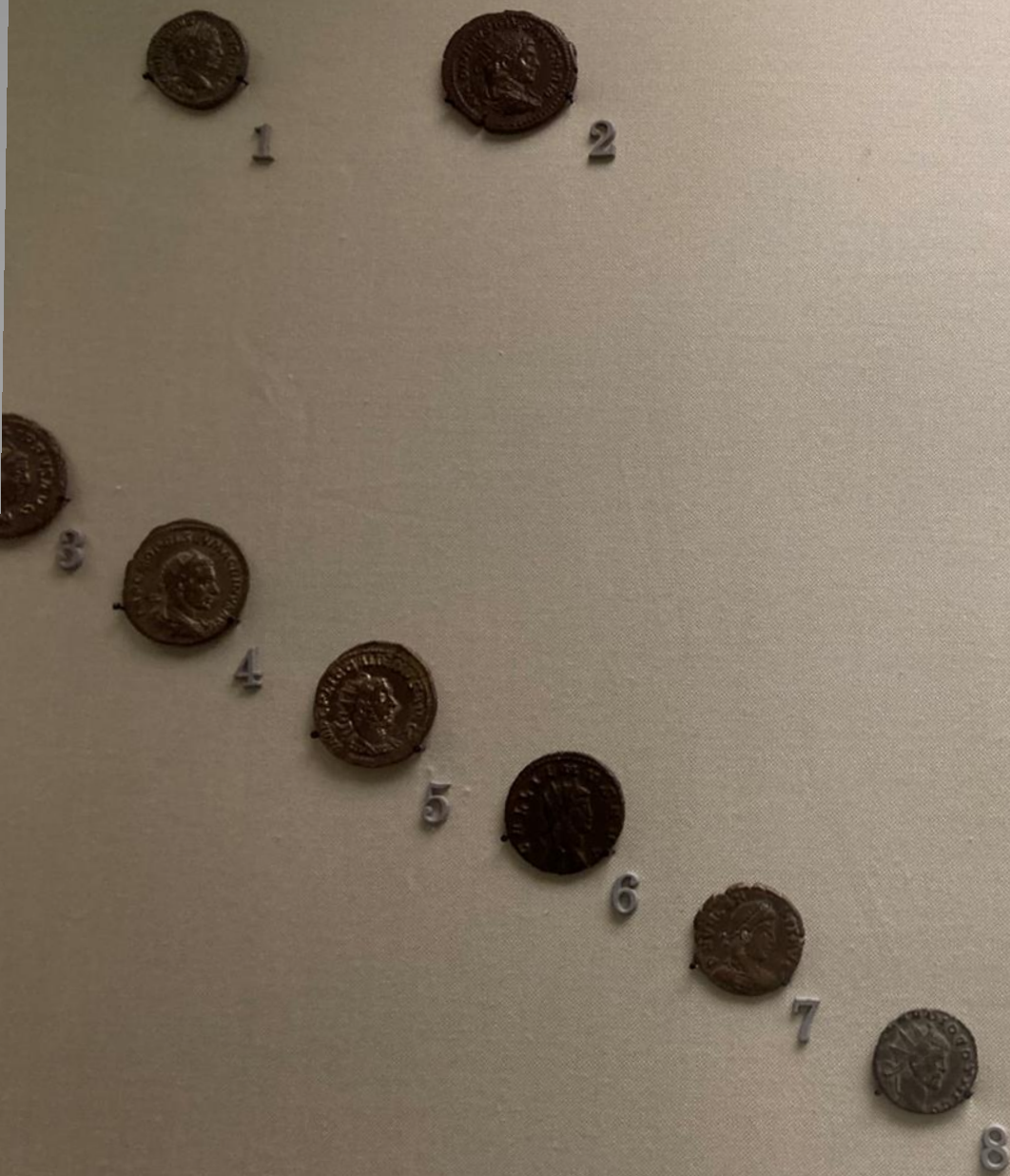
Given by Thomas Best Esq.  
PRB 1854.6-23.1

# COINAGE IN ROMAN BRITAIN AD 200-ABOUT 400

In the last two centuries of Roman coinage in Britain the use of coins increased enormously, both in the countryside and in the towns. This may have been a result of periods of inflation during the third and fourth centuries. Inflation devalued the coinage greatly, and made it much more suitable for everyday use. The people came to rely on low-value coinage, and produced their own copies in large quantities when supplies of official small change failed.

The fine silver coinage of the late fourth century was hoarded in larger quantities in Britain than anywhere else in the empire. The whole system failed, however, in the early fifth century with the end of Roman government, and people in Britain seem to have stopped using coins.





### The third century:

#### 1-2 *Denarius* and radiate of Caracalla

The *denarius* multiple introduced by Caracalla (AD 211-7) only had 1½ times the silver, but its sun-rayed imperial effigy ('radiate') indicated a double-*denarius*. A new form of debasement, it reduced the quantity of silver in circulation relative to coinage.

CM 1992,0509.141; 1937,0406.5 (Dorchester hoard)

#### 3-8 Debased radiates, AD 218-270

Radiates were around 50% silver when introduced, but by AD 270 this had dropped to almost 1%. Expanding supply made radiates abundant – and low value.

3) Macrinus (AD 217-8), 1966,0909.1 (Beachy Head hoard); 4) Philip I (AD 244-9) & 5) Gallienus (AD 253-6), 1937,0406.995 & 1937,0509.1656 (both Dorchester hoard); 6) Gallienus (AD 260-8), R.1646; 7) Victorinus (AD 269-71) 1961,0802.171 (Hollingbourne hoard); 8) Claudius II (deified, AD 270) 1987,0647.235 (Normanby hoard)



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### Late imperial portraits

The style of portraiture on Roman coins changed during the latter half of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. Individual facial traits became less and less carefully distinguished (nos. 9-15), until simplification of forms reached the point where imperial portraits are often impossible to distinguish from one another

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### 9-10 Radiates of Aurelian (AD 270-5)

The late 3<sup>rd</sup> century was a period of coinage reforms. Aurelian slightly improved the quality and silver content of the radiate (9). On the reverse (10), below the image of the sun god and his captives, the mark *XXI* guarantees the proportion of silver to be around 5%.



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CM 1981,0603.1; 1950,1006.539

### 11-16 Coins of Diocletian (AD 284-305)

This reign saw good quality gold (11-12) joined by a new pure silver (13-14) coinage. A radiate multiple, the *nummus* (15-16), was minted across the empire. This included London, here signed *LON* below the reverse figure.

CM 1844,1015.303 & 1903,0704.13; 1844,0425.2294 & B.2651; B.1; 1907,1009.2 (Weybridge hoard)

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17



18

### 17-18 The fourth century:

**Gold *solidi* of Constantine I (AD 306-37) (17), & Honorius (AD 393-423) (18)**

Constantine reduced the gold standard from 60 coins to the pound to 72. Most later emperors maintained this and largely copied Constantine's clean-shaven effigy. (See the Hoxne Treasure, case 23)

CM 1860,0329.59; 1991,0401.6 (Boscombe Down hoard)



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19



20



21

**19-21 Silver *siliquae* of Constantine II (AD 337-61) (19); Valentinian I (AD 364-75) (20) & Honorius (AD 393-423) (21)**

Instead of a fixed denomination, 4<sup>th</sup> century gold coins were valued by bullion weight. By the AD 350s this also extended to a widely produced silver coinage (see also the Hoxne Treasure in case 23)

CM 1969,0303.1 (Willesley hoard); 1984,0221.1 (Newton hoard); 1984,0526.1



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22



23



24



25



26

#### 22-26 4<sup>th</sup>C Roman bronze coins (*nummi*)

The *nummus* weight standard gradually reduced as its spending power fell relentlessly compared to gold. The last common base metal small change used in Britain for over a millennium, they were at times widely forged.

22) AD 310 (Constantine I) CM 1982,1034.12; 23-4) AD 330-5 (Constantine II) CM 1846,1002.28 & CM B.768; 25-6) Valens (AD 364-78) CM 1951,1115.1923 & .1963



28



29

27-29 *Solidus* of Carausius (27) minted in London; medallion of Carausius (28); radiate of Carausius (29)

In AD 286 Carausius, the commander of the British fleet in the English Channel, usurped power and set up an illegal regime in Britain and Gaul.

He immediately began minting coins in Britain. Some of these coins (29) attempted to legitimise his position by showing his bust alongside those of the legal Emperors Diocletian and Maximian, with the inscription *CARAVSIVS ET FRATRES SVI* ('Carausius and his brothers').

CM 1864,11-28-178; 1972,7-17-1; 1977,9-3-1





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32



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**30-31 Radiate of Allectus (30);  
electrotype of gold medallion of  
Constantius I (31) (original in  
Bibliothèque Municipale, Arras)**

Carausius was murdered in 293 by his finance minister Allectus who continued to mint coins in Britain until his overthrow by Constantius I in about 296. This overthrow is recorded in an impressive medallion which shows Britannia kneeling to Constantius in front of the gates of London (*LON*). Below the Emperor a military ship carries troops towards the city.

T G Barnett bequest 9135, 11-17-891; CM

**32-33 *Solidi* (32) and silver *siliqua* (33)  
of Magnus Maximus**

The final chapter in the story of Roman coinage in Britain came under the rebel Emperor Maximus, who ruled a breakaway empire consisting of Britain, Spain, Gaul and Africa between 383 and 388. At the time London was known as Augusta,



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CM 1912, 6-7-47; 1853, 1-5-12; 1867, 12-13-1

### **Coin use**

Coins seem to have been much more widely used in the 3rd and 4th centuries than they had been in the 150 years after the Roman invasion. On a typical archaeological site in Britain, about 90% of the Roman coins found date to this period. One reason for this surge in coin use seems to have been that many low-value coins were available. Unlike the high-value coins of the preceding centuries these were suitable for everyday use.

### **34 Typical selection of coin finds from a Romano-British site Magiovinium, Bucks**

The majority are low-value coins



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**34 Typical selection of coin finds from a Romano-British site**  
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CM 1977, 12-1-1-33

34



**35 Coins from a villa site**  
4th century  
Hinton St Mary, Dorset

For the first time, Roman coins are commonly found on rural as well as town and military sites. This, and the large quantities of coins used and lost, shows that coins use was much more widely spread in Britain in the latter half of the 3rd and 4th centuries than in the first two centuries after the invasion.

HM 64, 1; HM 64, 8; HM 65, 12; HM 64, 4

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### **Diocletian's Price Edict**

In AD 301 the Emperor Diocletian issued an edict intended to stop people charging extortionate prices for their goods. The Edict lists the maximum prices of many commodities. The cost of a day's wages, at least 25 times more than in the 1st century AD, shows the effect of inflation between the 1st and early 4th centuries.

1 day's wages for a farm labourer:  
25 *denarii*

1 day's wages for a baker: 50 *denarii*

1/2 litre of ordinary wine: 8 *denarii*

100 oysters: 100 *denarii*

### **36 Oyster shell, upper and lower valves**

Found in London

According to the Price Edict this Roman oyster would have had a value of 1 *denarius*.





36



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**3rd century hoards**

Hoards of radiates buried in the late 3rd century are commonly found.

It is not possible to relate these hoards to any one historical event.

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37



38



39



40



41

### 3rd century hoards

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37-41 Radiates of Valerian (37),  
Postumus (38), Tetricus I (39)  
and Tetricus II (40); group of  
uncleaned coins (41)  
Mildenhall, Wiltshire

CM 1983, 1-1-438/2; 1983, 1-1-2425/1; 1983-1-1-2617/120;  
1983, 1-1-2655/1; 1983, 1-1-3110



42

#### 4th century hoards

##### 42 *Siliquae* from a hoard Bishop's Cannings, Wiltshire

Silver *siliquae* were more commonly hoarded in Britain than in any other province of the Empire. About 100 *siliquae* hoards are known from Britain, varying in size from a few coins to the 14,500 found at Hoxne (case 22).

CM 1995, 7-2-2-20

#### Copying and forgery

Roman silver and gold coins continued to be forged in the 3rd and 4th centuries, as they had been since the Roman invasion. On a much larger scale, low-value Roman coins were copied on a local level whenever supply did not meet the requirements of the population.

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### 43 Barbarous radiates

These are recognizable by their odd shapes, strange styles of engraving, small size and poor, if any, lettering. Low-value radiates issued between AD 259 and 273 were copied in vast quantities. This may have happened as a result of Aurelian's reform of the coinage (AD 274), which improved the quality and value of coins and might therefore have made them too valuable for everyday use. The response of the British population was to produce their own low-value coins.

CM 1934, 9-5-152; 1928, 3-14-52; 1937, 2-12, 69; 1932, 9-9-21;  
1937, 2-12-68; 1937, 2-12-39

### 44 Copies of official bronze coins 4th century AD

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44



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Huge numbers of poor-quality copies of official bronze coins were also produced in the 4th century. The type most commonly copied was issued between AD 353 and 358, shortly after another reform of the coinage in AD 348. This type pictures a soldier spearing an enemy who has just fallen off his horse, although many copies are of such poor quality that little of the design is visible.

CM B9839; B9851; 1928, 3-14-164



### **Production techniques**

Unlike the struck coins they imitated, some 3rd and 4th century copies were made in coin moulds. Molten alloy would have been poured either into individual moulds or into a set of moulds joined by 'runners'. In the latter case individual coins could then have been broken apart when the metal cooled.

### **45 Crucibles and moulds for *denarii***

3rd century AD

Lingwell Gate, Yorkshire

PRB...

### **46 Moulds for small bronze**

**4th century coins of various types**

CM 1891, 6-23-4, 5





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CM 1891, 6-23-4, 5



### **The end of Roman Britain**

The supply of Roman coins to Britain ended with the withdrawal of most Roman military forces from the province in the early years of the 5th century AD. Roman coins quickly went out of use, and there seems to have been little or no attempt to produce coinage in Britain in the following years. Coin use seems to have stopped in Britain until the precious metal Anglo-Saxon coinage of the latter part of the 7th century.

### **47 *Siliquae* of Constantine III**

The last Roman coins used in Britain were issued by the Emperor Constantine III, and his withdrawal



47

**47 *Siliquae* of Constantine III**

The last Roman coins used in Britain were issued by the Emperor Constantine III, and his withdrawal from the province marked the political end of Roman Britain. Later Roman coins are known from the province, but were probably only used as bullion.

CM 1982, 12-9-1 & 2



50



48



49



50



51

**48-51 Full-sized *siliquae* of Constantius II and Honorius (48, (50); clipped *siliquae* of the same Emperors (49), (51)**

Hoxne hoard, Hoxne, Suffolk

Once Roman currency stopped being sent to Britain silver *siliquae* began to have their edges clipped off. This may have been to make the available silver go further, or simply because there was no longer a government strong enough to enforce currency regulations.

RIC VIII, Siscia 268; Hoxne 1994 019; CM 1907, 6-3-1;  
Hoxne 1994 019



52

**52 Late Roman bronze coins**  
Richborough, Kent

The last Roman bronze coins used in Britain are tiny and poorly made, but judging by the large numbers in which they are found, were widely used.

CM 1937, 11-9-92; CM 1934, 9-5-227

# LIFE IN THE ARMY

Both legionary and auxiliary units commonly recorded their building activities on wood, brick and stone. Sometimes these inscriptions are dated, providing vital evidence for the history of the province. It is known, for example, that three legions, II Augusta, XX Valeria Victrix and VI Victrix, carried out the main building work of Hadrian's Wall, although they were normally stationed in the fortresses of Caerleon, Chester and York. The Wall itself was garrisoned by auxiliary units housed in 16 forts along the frontier line.

Army careers were often described on tombstones and also on discharge certificates, which conferred the rights of Roman citizenship upon auxiliary soldiers after 25 years' service. Retirement for legionaries generally brought a cash payment or a plot of land, usually in the province in which the soldier had served. Special high-ranking towns, *coloniae*, were created for this purpose, four being known in Britain: Colchester, Lincoln, Gloucester and York.





### Building-stone

From the Hadrian's Wall fort at Benwell, Northumberland

The inscription, *LEG II AVG*, is marked both on and below a military standard flanked by a goat and a Pegasus. It records the completion of building work by the 2nd legion Augusta. The Pegasus and Capricorn were the emblems of that legion. The main base of the 2nd legion was at Caerleon, but detachments were seconded to help in the construction of the Hadrianic frontier system.



**Tile antefix**  
Holt, Clwyd

Made in the tilery of the 20th legion, whose boar emblem decorates the plaque, this was one of a row of ornate terminals set along the eaves of a tile roof.

Given by A. Acton  
PRB 1911.2.6.1

**Two roof tiles**

One from Chester, Cheshire

One tile is stamped LEG IX HISP, this, the 9th legion Hispana, was based at York in the late 1st century AD, but was moved from the province in the early 2nd century. The stamp on the other tile reads LEG XX M and indicates that it was made in the tilery of the 20th legion, which was based at Chester.

PRB OA; PRB 1855.9-1. 1 (Given by Rev. W. Massie)

Roof Tile  
BEP 1911.0206.1

On loan to Rome: City & Empire, International  
Touring Exhibition. 23 February 2018 -



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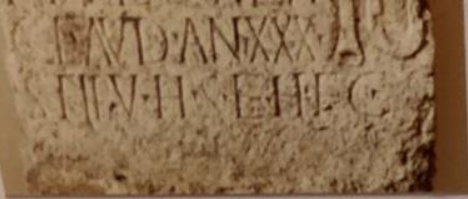
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PRB 1871.12  
PSA; PRB 1





Tombstone of the cavalryman Andes, who served in the army for five years and died at the age of thirty in the late 1st century AD. He is shown in characteristic pose riding down a fallen enemy. The inclusion of a trumpet on the right of the inscription suggests that Andes was a *bucinator*, *tubicen* or *cornicen*, who relayed signals in battle or played on ceremonial occasions.  
From Mainz-Zahlbach, Germany. Landesmuseum, Mainz.

Object removed for Loan  
Roof Tile  
MSP 1911.0296.1  
On loan to Home: City & Empire, International  
Touring Exhibition, 23 February 2016.

**Two bronze trumpet mouth pieces**  
Great Chesterford, Essex/  
said to be from Housesteads,  
Northumberland

Cast metal mouth pieces tend to survive better than the sheet metal sections of trumpets. At base, trumpets sounded the watches and in battle, the advance and retreat.

PRB 1871.12-21.1 (Given by the Rev. William Greenwell FSA); PRB P1989.9-1.1





**Bronze die**  
Dulton, Staffordshire  
**Bronze die set**  
Knowle Hill, Lichfield,  
Staffordshire

These dies were probably used to emboss thin sheet metal for the manufacture of decorative discs and mounts. These were used in large numbers in the 1st – 2nd century AD on Roman helmets and armour and other military metalwork.

P&E P1984.6-2.1; P1994.6-1.1-2

**Silver arm and plaque from a small statue of Victory**  
Tunshill, Butterworth, Lancashire

From a statue which probably belonged to the shrine of the 6th legion Victrix, based at York from the early 2nd-late 4th century AD. The inscription on the plaque, originally attached to the wrist, reads: *To Victory to the Victorious Sixth Legion. Valerius Rufus, performs his vow willingly to a worthy cause.*

PRB P1983.10-1.1

**Two bronze standard finials**

The example on the right is from near Canterbury, Kent. Probably from the top of wooden-shafted military standards. In battle, standards were used both to convey commands and as rallying points, allowing dispersed troops to identify and rejoin their unit rapidly.

PRB 1927.12-12.6



### Bronze standard finials

Sample on the right is from near Sittingbourne, Kent. Probably from the 1st century AD. Made of wooden shafted military standards. In battle, standards were used to convey commands and rallying points, allowing dispersed soldiers to identify and rejoin their units easily.

12.6

### The Bredgar Hoard

Bredgar, Sittingbourne, Kent

37 gold *aurei*, the latest of which are issues of Claudius struck between AD 41 and 42. The hoard, which represents more than four years' pay for a legionary soldier, was buried about the time of the conquest of Britain in AD 43 near the likely site of the decisive battle between the Roman invaders and the Britons on the River Medway south of Rochester.

CM 1957.10-10.1-34; 1965.12-12.1-3


### Bronze armpurse

2nd-3rd century AD

Farndale, north Yorkshire

Soldiers, especially legionaries, wore this type of armpurse. Many have been found in forts and fortresses, some with coins inside. This one had been carefully concealed in the side of a prehistoric cairn. On discovery in 1849 it was said to have contained 'nothing but a sort of ashes like decayed paper'.

PRB 1873.12-19.175



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2nd-3rd century AD  
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PRB 1873.12-19.175

**Large bronze belt buckle**  
Roman fort, Catterick, Yorkshire  
late 4th-early 5th century AD

Probably from an ornate belt set of a military officer or official. The stylised animals are a pair of seahorses flanked by dolphins.

PRB 1962.11-6.1

**Iron dagger handle with silver-gilt mounts**

Found in inner ditch of Roman stone fort, Richborough, Kent  
late 4th-early 5th century AD

Given by HM Ministry of Works PRB 1950.2-2.1

**Bronze statuette of Mars**  
2nd century AD  
Earith, Huntingdonshire

The god is shown in characteristic warlike attire. He wears the armour of a general – an elaborate helmet, sheet metal leg-guards (greaves) and an embossed chest plate (cuirass) moulded to the form of the body. Originally he would have held a spear and shield.

PRB 1871.6-1.1

**Enamelled bronze**  
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PIGB 1971.61.1



**Enamelled-bronze buckle plate**  
Weekley, Northamptonshire  
2nd–3rd century AD

A colourful military belt fitting inlaid with three panels of fine *millefiori* enamel. This decorative technique became increasingly popular in the 2nd century.

PRB P1986.4-1.1

**Enamelled handle and pan**  
Braughing, Hertfordshire (pan)  
1st–2nd century AD

The handle is from a pan similar to those that are displayed next to it from Braughing, Staffordshire Moorlands and Rudge Coppice. It is decorated with a crouched hare (green, with red eye) and a curly tailed hound (red). The pan's wreath and leafy scrolls are close in style to Roman architectural ornament and to Gaulish samian pottery.

Given by the Rev. Charles Puller  
PRB P1994.4-1.1; 1870.12-1.1

**Replica of the Staffordshire Moorlands pan**  
2nd century AD

This colourful bronze pan lacks its handle and base. The flamboyant Celtic-style ornament is inlaid with turquoise, blue and red enamel.

The inscription below the rim lists four forts at the western end of Hadrian's Wall:  
MAIS (Bowness-on-Solway)  
COGGABATA (Drumburgh)  
VXELODVNVM (Stanwix)  
CAMMOGLANNA (Castlesteads)

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VXELODVNVM (Stanwix)  
CAMMOGLANNA (Castlesteads)



The remaining inscription RIGORE VALI AELI DRACONIS appears to refer to Hadrian's Wall itself and to a man named Draco. He may have been a soldier who had the pan made as a souvenir of his military service on the Wall.

Jointly acquired by the British Museum, the Potteries Museum and Art Gallery (Stoke-on-Trent) and the Tullie House Museum and Gallery (Carlisle) through the substantial and generous support of the Heritage Lottery Fund  
P&E 2005.12-4.1

**Replica of the**  
2nd century AD  
Rudge Coppice

An electrotype of a bronze bowl found at the site of a Roman fort on Hadrian's Wall, originally painted with red and blue enamels. Above a decorative band is an inscription in Latin: RIGORE VALI AELI DRACONIS. Below the rim is an inscription in Latin: RIGORE VALI AELI DRACONIS. Below the rim is an inscription in Latin: RIGORE VALI AELI DRACONIS.





**Bronze swan or goose head**  
Richborough, Kent

This may be a model of the *cheniscus* or goose head mounted on the stern or prow of a Roman ship. It may have adorned a monument with scenes of naval battles or trophies.

Given by HM Ministry of Works  
PRB 1950.4-2.1







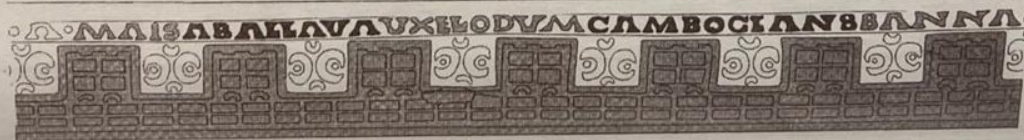
**Replica of the 'Rudge Cup'**

2nd century AD  
Rudge Coppice, Wiltshire

An electrotype copy of the original bronze bowl found in 1725 in a well on the site of a Roman villa. It shows a schematised drawing of Hadrian's Wall, originally picked out in coloured enamels. Above are the names of five forts at the western end of the Wall:

*MAIS, ABALLAVA, VXELODUM, CAMBOGLANS, BANNA*, (Bowness on Solway, Burgh by Sands, Stanwix, Castlesteads and Birdoswald). The bowl was made in Britain, probably as a souvenir.

Original in the possession of His Grace the Duke of Northumberland, Alnwick Castle  
PRB P1964.10-7.1  
(Illustration) 'Unrolled' drawing of the 'Rudge Cup'.



**Bronze swan or**  
Richborough, Kent

This may be a model of a swan or goose head mounted on the prow of a Roman galley, which was adorned with a swan's head in naval battles or trophies.

Given by HM Ministry of Works  
PRB 1950.4-2.1



**Inscribed floor tile**  
Probably from London

The sketch, scratched before firing, appears to show a Roman lighthouse (*pharos*), like the pair that flanked the Roman harbour at Dover.

PRB 1856.7.1.703

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 ET INAI. CLONVM MILLIARIA ET TALPINE  
 RVM ET INORINORVM ET CNERNOV  
 ET IBAETASIORVM ET VNGRORVM MILL  
 LIARIA ET ITHRACVM ET ITHSACARVM  
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 SVB GENERATIO MARCELO CVI QVINAE ET  
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an or goose head  
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be a model of the *cheniscus*  
 head mounted on the stern  
 of a Roman ship. It may have  
 a monument with scenes of  
 ttles or trophies.

Ministry of Works  
 21

**Bronze military 'diploma'**

Malpas, Cheshire  
 AD 103

This official military discharge  
 comprising two inscribed bronze  
 plates was a copy of a master held  
 in Rome. It was issued by the  
 Emperor Trajan to Reburrus, a  
 Spanish junior officer (*decurion*)  
 in the 1st Pannonian cavalry  
 regiment. The certificate was a  
 precious possession that granted  
 citizenship and the right to marry.

Given by Lord Kenyon  
 PRB 1813.12.11.1-2

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PRB 1856.7.1.7



### Terracotta lamp

1st century AD, Colchester, Essex

Vessels like the ship on this lamp were used by the British fleet whose duties included reconnaissance, warfare and transport.

PRB 1870.4-2.691

### Bronze model of a galley-prow

London

The function of this object is uncertain, but it shows clearly two characteristic features of a Roman galley: the stern-post is in the form of a swan or goose-head, while the keel ends in a dog-headed ram. On one side is a reversed inlaid inscription which reads *AMMILLA AUG FELIX*.

PRB 1856.7-1.29

### Stamped roof tile

Probably 2nd century AD  
Lympne, Kent

The stamp reads *CL BR*, (*Classis Britannica*) 'The British fleet'. Lympne appears to have been a base for a detachment of the fleet. An altar from Lympne, set up by a fleet commander is displayed nearby.

PRB 1856.7-1.5027.



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tain, but it shows clearly two  
cteristic features of a Roman  
: the stern-post is in the form of

**Stamped roof tile**  
Probably 2nd century AD  
Lympne, Kent  
The stamp reads *CL BR*, (*Classis Britannica*) The British Fleet

# LEGIONARY EQUIPMENT

The most distinctive items of legionary equipment were the heavy javelin (*pilum*), and curved rectangular shield (*scutum*). Equally distinctive, though less specific to the legions were the dagger (*pugio*), the short thrusting sword (*gladius*), and the segmented or strip armour 'lorica segmentata'. This type of armour was developed in the first century AD and would have provided better protection than mail tunics against downward blows from long swords. The groin region was protected by an 'apron' of thick leather straps, reinforced with metal studs, which hung from the sword belt. Various types of helmet were worn, either of bronze or iron, or a combination of the two. Common to all were domed bowls with integral neck-guard, which protected the head, neck and shoulders; the added brow-guard designed to deflect downward-slashing sword blows from the face; and hinged cheek-pieces.

Soldiers were issued with their arms and equipment, which had to be returned to stores at the end of their



# THE RIBCHESTER HOARD

In 1796 a clogmaker's son, playing behind his father's house in Ribchester, Lancashire, discovered a mass of corroded metalwork. It proved to be a hoard of Roman military equipment, and the spectacular bronze face-mask vizor helmet has ever since been one of the celebrated finds of Roman Britain.

Recent research reveals that the hoard dates from the late first-early second century AD. It seems to have been placed in storage in a wooden box, probably beneath a barrack block floor in the fort in about AD 120. Until then the fort was garrisoned by a cavalry regiment, the Ala II Asturum. The hoard consists mainly of a part set of cavalry sports equipment and military awards.

Cavalry sports - *hippika gymnasia* - were flamboyant displays of military horsemanship and weapon drill. They served both to entertain the troopers and to keep them at peak performance. The most colourful events were mock battles among the elite riders of the unit, often in the guise of Greeks and Amazons. Elaborate suites of equipment, for both men and horses, were worn on these occasions. The richly-decorated metal fittings of the Ribchester suite included helmet, military awards, harness discs and pendants, saddle plates and horse eye-guards.




Ink and watercolour sketch drawn by Charles Townley in about 1798, pinpointing the find spot of the Ribchester hoard (marked 2).



Two cavalry troopers preparing for the *hippika gymnasia*. The equipment of the soldier and horse on the right is based on objects in





### Cavalry sports helmet (‘The Ribchester Helmet’)

Two-piece helmet of embossed bronze consisting of a head-piece and face mask. The scene on the head-piece is of a skirmish between infantry and cavalry. Fittings survive on the head-piece for a crest-box and a pair of trailing streamers or ‘manes’. This is one of the finest examples of the helmets worn by top cavalry troopers in the colourful cavalry sports events.

PRB 1814.7-5.1

Ink and watercolour sketch drawn by Charles Townley in about 1788, pinpointing the find spot of the Ribchester hoard (marked Z).



### Military awards

Remains of the sheet bronze backing plates of five discs (*phalerae*). *Phalerae* were part of a set of military awards worn on a leather strap harness on the recipient's chest. The decorative front face, probably of embossed silver, had been removed in antiquity.

PRB 1814.7-5.16-20

(Illustration) Photograph of the tombstone of Cnaeus



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### Horse eye-guards of pierced bronze

These strange-looking objects protected horse's eyes in battle and cavalry sports events. They were often attached to leather or bronze chamfrons which encased the exposed front of the horse's head.

PRB 1814.7.5.2-5



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### Bronze pans

In addition to the combat equipment the hoard also included pots and pans which probably belonged to a trooper or his unit. The deep saucepan, now lacking much of its bowl, was used for cooking and its inner surface was tinned to avoid tainting food. The smaller pan was a general-purpose vessel. The two small fragments may be parts of a candelabrum. (The third bronze pan from this hoard is displayed in Case 4).

PRB 1814.7-5.23-25 and 27-28

### Harness fittings

Cavalry horses were sometimes provided with fittings similar to those of their riders. Most combined decoration with utility. Strap junctions were covered by ornate silver-plated bronze discs engraved with palmette and vine spray motifs picked out in niello and copper inlays. Sometimes hinged pendants were added, like those here, with low relief ornament in the form of oak leaves and acorns.

PRB 1814.7-5.7-15 and 31-35

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 PRB 1814.

### Wild boar tusk

Because of its warlike nature and virility the wild boar was a potent symbol often associated with the military - it was, for example, the emblem of the 20th legion. The tusks, the essence of the animal, were often perforated or mounted for use as amulets. This example, now rather distorted and damaged, was held in a bronze mount and was probably suspended from the horse harness.

PRB 1814. 7-5. 21





**Moorish cavalryman**  
London

The rider with his round shield was originally mounted on a bronze horse. His distinctive style of hair and beard may be closely compared with representations of Moorish (North African) cavalymen shown on Trajan's column.

PRB 1856.7-1.19

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### Cavalry combat helmet

1st century AD

Witcham Gravel, Ely, Cambridgeshire

Protection was given by an inner iron head-piece and neck-guard, now largely missing. The outer bronze casing was primarily decorative, though the small bosses would have helped to deflect weapon blows. The dome, neck-guard and cheek-pieces were tinned, providing a striking colour contrast with the bronze parts. The crest box, one cheek-piece and several of the bosses are now missing.

PRB 1801.11-17.1





### Cavalry combat helmet

1st century AD  
Witcham Gravel, Ely, Cambridgeshire

Protection was given by an inner iron head-piece and neck-guard, now largely missing. The outer bronze casing was primarily decorative, though the small bosses would have helped to deflect weapon blows. The dome, neck-guard and cheek-pieces were tinned, providing a striking colour contrast with the bronze parts. The crest box, one cheek-piece and several of the bosses are now missing.

PRB 1891.11-17.1

### Three iron spurs

Hod Hill, Dorset/Woodchester,  
Gloucestershire

1st century AD  
PRB 1893.6-1. 124, 125; 1810.2-10. (OA 304)

### Iron caltrop

Walthamstow, London  
Given by C. H. Read, FSA PRB 1903.2-14.18

These vicious objects were strewn over the ground to break up cavalry charges. The angle of the four spikes ensured that however it fell the caltrop always had one spike protruding upwards.

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**Wooden dagger**  
Probably 1st century AD  
London

Waterlogged burial conditions preserved this wooden dagger. It is of the same size and shape as the iron dagger (*pugio*) of Roman legionary soldiers. If not a child's toy it is likely to have been used as a practice weapon in military training.

P&E 1856.0701.1397

**Iron sword with bronze hilt fittings**  
1st century AD, Hod Hill, Dorset

A large straight-sided Roman sword with Celtic style decoration on the hilt fittings. The Roman garrison at Hod Hill included detachments of both auxiliary cavalry and legionaries. The sword may have belonged to a soldier of either unit, though its size is perhaps better adapted to use by a cavalry trooper. A metallographic examination revealed no evidence for hardening of the cutting edges.

PRO 1892.91.492

**'Ring-pommel' sword and scabbard end**  
Pevensey, East Sussex  
3rd century AD

An iron sword used by Roman soldiers in the 2nd-3rd century AD. Said to have been found with coins of the Emperor Commodus (reigned AD 176-92), it seems to have been put in the ground intact. The wood and leather scabbard has rotted, but its circular bronze end-fitting, with tin surface, survives.

Purchased by the British Museum Friends  
P&E 2004.0.1.2



**Two iron short swords**  
River Thames/Mansion House, London

The slender sword from the Thames is complete but the tip of the Mansion House blade appears to have been reworked and the original length of the sword was probably greater. Analysis showed that the cutting edges were not hardened.

**Bronze chape (lower terminal of a scabbard)**  
2nd century AD  
Fremington Hagg, Reeth, North Yorkshire

All given by Sir A. W. Franks  
PRB 1908.9.4.20; 1901.9.5.4; 1890.8.2.135

**Four iron spearheads and two iron arrowheads**  
Hod Hill, Dorset

1st century AD  
Auxiliary soldiers used different types of spear that showed great variety in the shape and size of the spearhead. The largest example displayed here was probably from an infantry weapon. The two slender examples were possibly from cavalry lances. Archers were included as specialists in the auxiliary units.

PRB 1892.9.1.1011; 1022; 1078; 1185-6; 1900.4.5.248

**Two iron artillery**  
1st century AD, Ho

The army used two artillery, the stone- and the bolt-shooter. Metal parts of these occasionally been in use. The most common remain wooden catapult bolts. Metal parts were usually carefully made in a socket and elongate but a simpler type was used and flanged socket. Metal parts were manufactured locally for the normal supply system.

PRB 1892.9.1.1091, 1144



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**Fragment of iron mail**  
1st century AD  
Deanery Field, Chester

Part of a short tunic or 'shirt'.  
The mail is of the most normal form  
consisting of alternating rows of  
punched rings and rivetted wire links.  
Each ring passes through four others.

Given by Professor H. Newstead FRS  
P&E 928, 74.8

**Two fragments of shield bindings**  
1st century AD, Hod Hill, Dorset

Rivetted bronze binding from the  
edge of a shield with rectangular

**Two bronze shield bosses**  
2nd–3rd century AD  
Papcastle, Cumbria; Kirkham,  
Lancashire

Metal centre bosses strengthened  
the wooden shields of auxiliary  
soldiers. Their hollow back provided  
space for a hand grip, while the  
domed front deflected weapon  
blows. Appropriately, one is  
engraved with battle imagery  
featuring the war-god Mars.

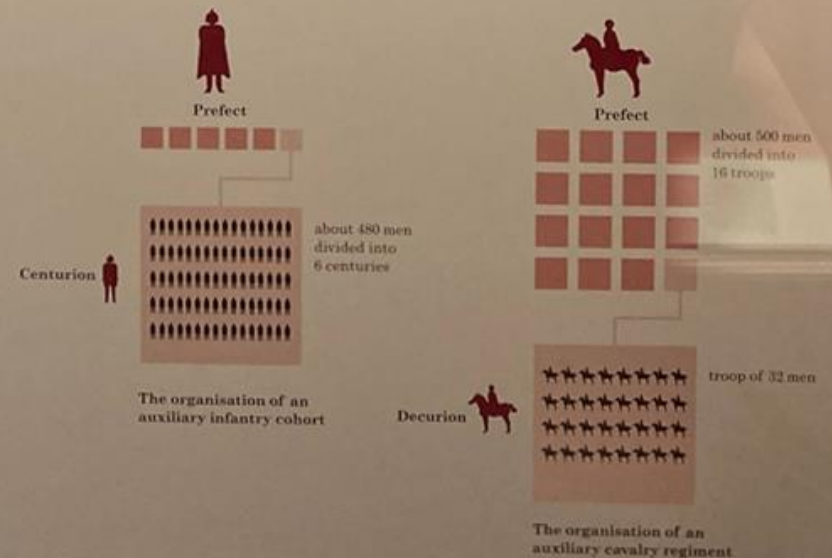
P&E 1870, 1013.9; Towndley Collection



# AUXILIARY SOLDIERS

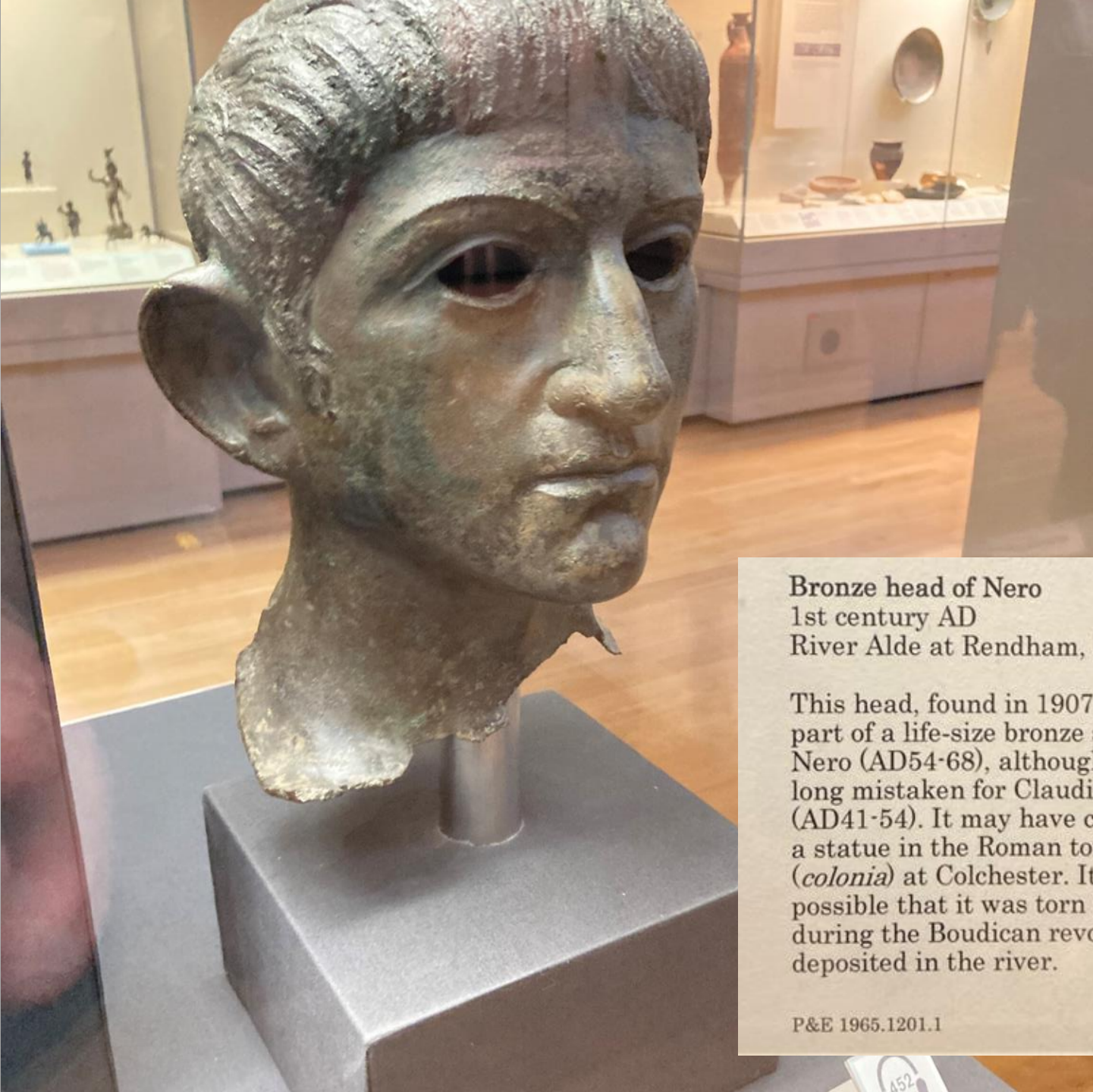
Serving alongside the heavy infantry of the Roman legions were regiments of *auxilia*, mostly about 500 strong, who provided light infantry and cavalry together with specialist troops like archers and slingers. Their mobility made them ideal as scouts and flank-guards on campaign, and they were also used for routine patrolling and defence. Increasingly, they joined the legions in the forefront of battle.

The infantry regiments (*cohortes*) were always more numerous than the expensive *alae* of cavalry, but mixed units of cavalry and infantry (*cohortes equitatae*) became popular. The auxiliaries were normally recruited from new provinces or from tribes outside the Empire, and their equipment and dress sometimes reflected their origins. Usually, however, in the first to third centuries AD, they wore an iron mail shirt or bronze scale tunic and carried a flat shield of oval, rectangular or hexagonal shape. Their swords tended to be longer than the legionary *gladius*. Spears differed from unit to unit, and the narrow-bladed type was well-adapted to cavalry use. However, much of the success of the Roman army came from its ability to adapt to face different enemies and the appearance of units and their equipment was continually developing.



◀ An auxiliary infantryman and cavalry trooper of the mid-1st century AD  
Painted reconstruction by Karen Hughes

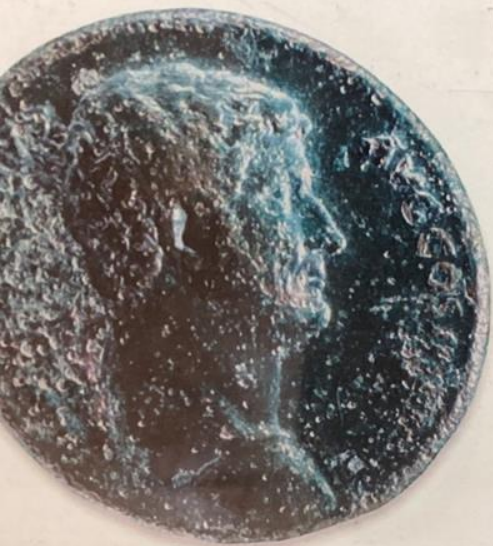




**Bronze head of Nero**  
1st century AD  
River Alde at Rendham, Suffolk

This head, found in 1907, formed part of a life-size bronze statue of Nero (AD54-68), although it was long mistaken for Claudius (AD41-54). It may have come from a statue in the Roman town (*colonia*) at Colchester. It is possible that it was torn down during the Boudican revolt and deposited in the river.

P&E 1965.1201.1



### Hadrian's visit to Britain, AD 122

The visit is commemorated in the design of one of Hadrian's coins. The Emperor appears before a parade of soldiers labelled below as *EXERC(ITUS) BRITANNICUS*, that is '[the Roman] army of Britain'.

CM BMC (Hadrian) 1672

the Empire, and there are many  
marble statues of him, but this  
bronze is a rare survival.

1848.11-3.1



Hadrian's visit to Britain,

The visit is commemorated  
in the design of one of Hadrian's coins.  
The Emperor appears before a  
parade of soldiers labelled  
as *EXERC(ITUS)*  
*BRITANNICUS*, that is '[the  
Roman] army of Britain'.





**Bronze hand**  
Lower Thames Street, London

This bronze hand is of about the same colossal scale as the head of Hadrian in this case, and the gesture, with extended finger, is one which is appropriate for an Emperor. It could well be from the same statue.

P&E 1856.7-1.18

**The Emperor Hadrian**  
(AD 117-138)

2nd century AD  
Found in the River Thames at London Bridge, in 1834

This bronze head comes from a larger than life-size statue. The statue probably stood in a public space in Roman London, perhaps in the forum. It may have been put up to commemorate Hadrian's visit to Britain in AD 122, during which he ordered the construction of a wall to defend the north of the province. Hadrian travelled widely

in the Empire, marble statues of the Emperor in bronze is a rare

P&E 1848.11-3.1

statues and busts of stone or bronze were displayed in many official and public places. These images, sometimes colossal, were a part of official propaganda symbolising the power of the state and the unity of the Empire.

The widespread distribution of Imperial imagery had important political aims, but it also had an effect on fashion. For example, beards became popular after the accession of Hadrian, and women imitated the hairstyles of Emperesses even in Britain.

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in the Empire, and there are many marble statues of him, but this bronze is a rare survival.

P&E 1848.11-3.1





### Imperial imagery

The cult of the Emperor was of great importance in Roman military and civil administration, combining religion and politics. Dead Emperors were often made into gods. Technically the living Emperor, who was the state's chief priest, was not himself worshipped as a god, but his *numen*, the spirit of his power and authority, was.

Coinage was the main way of spreading the image of the Emperor and information about his achievements. In addition,

statues and busts of stone or bronze were displayed in many official and public places. These images, sometimes colossal, were a part of official propaganda symbolising the power of the state and the unity of the Empire.

The widespread distribution of Imperial imagery had important political aims, but it also had an effect on fashion. For example, beards became popular after the accession of Hadrian, and women imitated the hairstyles of Empresses even in provinces as remote as Britain.





*Roman Britain*

## THE IMAGE OF CHRIST FROM HINTON ST MARY

This is the central roundel of a 4th-century AD mosaic floor from a villa at Hinton St Mary, Dorset. It is one of the most important early Christian remains from the Roman Empire.

The roundel is probably the earliest known mosaic picture of Christ. It is the focal point of the main floor in the position usually occupied by a figure of a pagan god or goddess. However, the Greek letters X and P (chi and rho) behind the head indicate that the person is probably Christ. They are the first two letters of the word Christ in Greek and the usual symbol of early Christianity. At either side are pomegranates, signalling immortality.

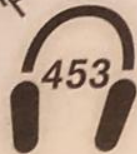
In the corners of the main mosaic are four heads. This position, often given to personifications of the four seasons or winds, is occupied here by what are possibly Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, the four Gospel writers. The mosaic formed the floor of two interlinked rooms of the villa. In the smaller room, the mosaic's central scene is of the pagan hero Bellerophon overpowering the triple-headed Chimaera – perhaps a Christian symbol of Good overcoming Evil.

Discovered and excavated between 1963 and 1964, the full mosaic measures 8.1 x 5.2 metres.

PY 1965,0409.1



453





Watercolour painting of the mosaic showing  
the colours as they would originally  
have appeared

Painting: David S. Neal, 1963

Gen  
exca



General view of the mosaic as revealed by excavation in 1963.

# GLASS

Roman glassware is technically and aesthetically of the highest quality. The invention of glass-blowing in the first century BC and the resulting increase in production led to the material becoming cheaper and more widely available, so that glass vessels were used not only for fine tableware but also for the packaging and transport of some foodstuffs.

Glass production was undoubtedly practised in most areas of the Empire, but it leaves few archaeological traces. As the material is recyclable, glassmakers would have collected broken vessels and re-used the fragments. Glass sherds are consequently rarer site finds than pottery sherds, which have no further use after breakage.

Most of the complete glass vessels surviving from the Roman period have been recovered from graves where they had been placed, with other possessions, to accompany the dead, or had been used as cinerary urns to contain cremated human remains. Such vessels were sometimes purpose-made, but large bottles which were probably originally designed to contain foodstuffs were also re-used as cinerary urns.







**1 Square bottle**

1st-2nd century AD, Faversham, Kent

Mould-blown glass vessels of this shape were widely used to transport and store foodstuffs; a robust and space-saving design, they were made in a variety of sizes. In some cases their final use was as a container for cremated bones.

**2 Globular glass cinerary urn**

1st-2nd century AD  
Hemel Hempstead, Hertfordshire

PRB 1289.1870; PRB 1840.10.15.2

**3 Oil-flask**

1st century AD  
Richborough, Kent

This type of vessel contained oil for use in bathing. Dark blue glass was much admired in antiquity as in more recent periods.

PRB 1932.3-14.1



3 Oil-flask  
1st century AD  
Richborough, Kent

This type of vessel contained oil for use in bathing. Dark blue glass was much admired in antiquity as in more recent periods.

FRB 1982.5.41.1

4-5 Flagon and cut-glass beaker  
1st century AD  
Barnwell, Cambridgeshire

The beaker in colourless glass with regular wheel-cut facets is an imported item of very high quality. Cutting and engraving techniques were similar to those used for working gemstones and semi-precious stones.

Reproduced by Peter Slade, Esq.  
FRB 1969.5.1.71, 1969.5.1.204

3 Beaker with chariot-racing scene  
1st century AD, Colchester, Essex

Cylindrical mould-blown glass vessels with scenes from the circus or the arena may have been intended as souvenirs, showing not only a picture of the sporting event but the names of participants. The two lower friezes of decoration on this example depict

the four competing horse chariots) and architectural features of the track, while the upper frieze shows the names of the competitors, Cresces, apud the winner.

Given by the excavators of FRB 1970.3.34.3



**4-5 Flagon and cut-glass beaker**

1st century AD

Barnwell, Cambridgeshire

The beaker in colourless glass with regular wheel-cut facets is an imported item of very high quality. Cutting and engraving techniques were similar to those used for working gemstones and semi-precious stones.

Bequeathed by Felix Slade, Esq.  
PRB 1868.5-1.171, 1868.5-1.234



### 7 Head-vase

1st century AD

King William Street, London

Some mould-blown glass beakers and flasks were made in the shape of human heads, including the type shown here, modelled as the head of a black African. The glassmaker's signature, *C. Caesi Bugaddi*, was incorporated in the mould and appears very faintly on the nape of the neck

and beneath the chin. A head of Sol with a crown of sun-rays is moulded under the base. Another beaker from the same mould was found at the Roman fortress of Caerleon, in south Wales.

PRB P. 1973.7-2.386



**8 Jug**

2nd century AD  
Bayford, Kent

The elegant form of this vessel  
exemplifies the mastery of the  
Roman glassmaker.

PRB 1883.12-13.295



9-10 Pillar-moulded bowl and flagon

1st century AD  
Radnage, Buckinghamshire

The flagon in amber-coloured glass and the blue-and-white bowl come from a 1st-century AD grave. 'Pillar-moulded' bowls with raised external ribs were popular in the first century and were probably made in Italy and exported to the provinces. Many were of naturally-coloured blue-green glass, but examples in dark colours or multi-coloured patterns, like this one in deep blue with opaque white marbling, represented a more costly class of tableware.

Presented by W. Gordon Ross, Esq.  
PRB 1923.6-6.1.2

11 Bowl

1st-2nd century AD, Faversham, Kent

The slightly angular profile of this bowl is similar to that of a contemporary samian pottery form.

12 *Unguentarium*

2nd-3rd century AD  
Colchester, Essex

Small glass flasks and bottles in a variety of shapes were used as containers for ointments and cosmetics.

PRB 1312.1870, 1844.2-23.25

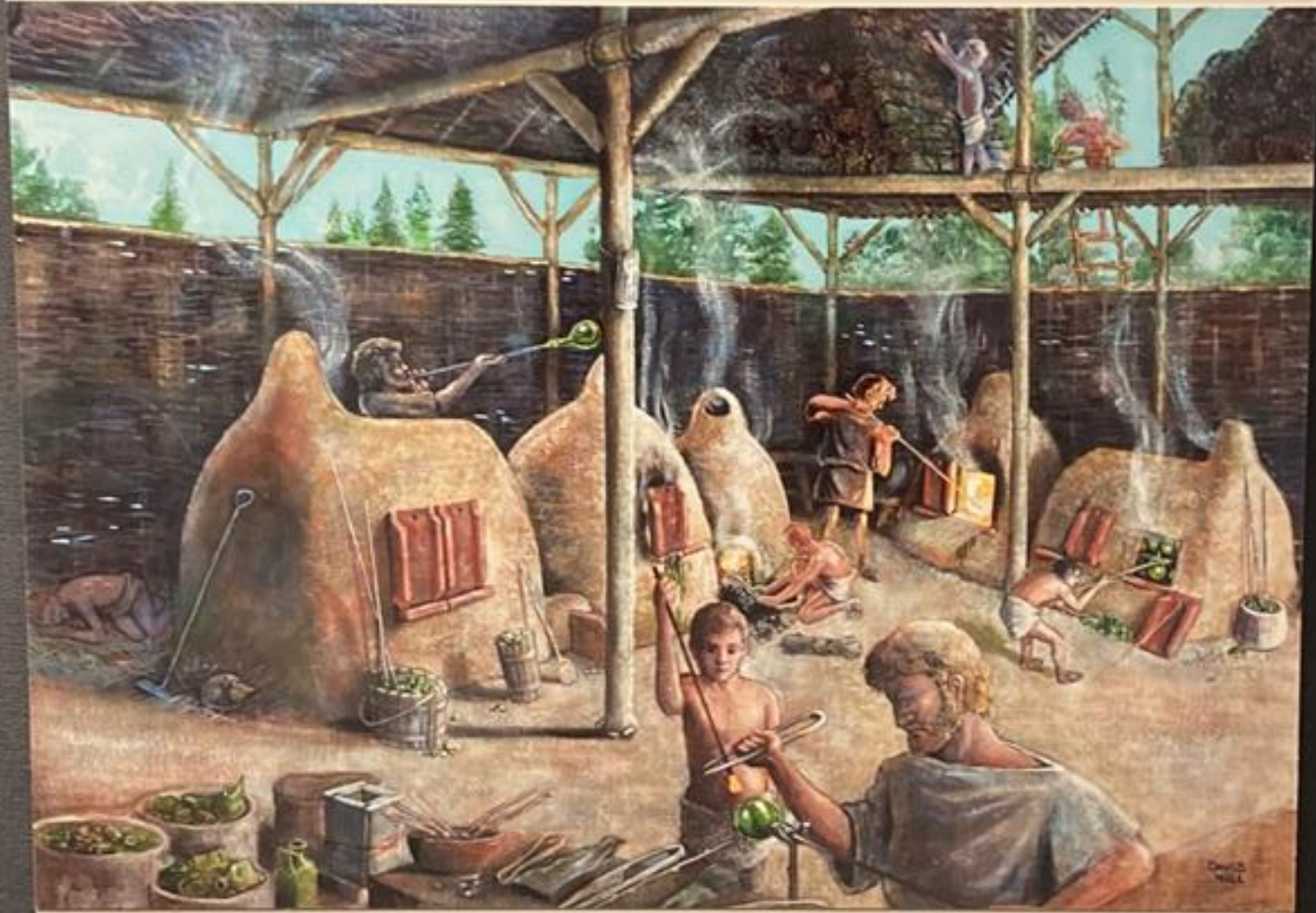
# GLASS MAKING

Glass has unique physical properties which enable it to be shaped and ornamented in ways impossible for clay or metal, and Roman glassmakers exploited these to the full. In addition to free-blown vessels, some containers were made by blowing the glass into a prepared mould to create plastic forms or elaborate relief decoration; the name of the manufacturer was also sometimes incorporated.

A wide range of colours can be produced by adding or removing different chemical ingredients. While the natural chemical composition of the material produces the attractive light blue-green frequently seen in Roman glassware, water-clear glass, and opaque or translucent shades of white, red, yellow, and a variety of greens, browns, blues and purples were all made and were used on their own or in decorative combinations.

As a manufactured counterpart to rock-crystal and other hardstones, glass was also sometimes worked using the gem-cutter's techniques of cutting and engraving using metal wheels.





Imaginative reconstruction of a late Roman glass workshop in the Hambacher Forest, Germany  
© David Hill 1996





**8 Glass funnel**  
North Wraxhall, Wilts  
Presented by G. Poulett Scrope, Esq.  
PRB 1861.3-7.2



**9 Two-handled flagon**  
2nd century AD  
Bayford, Kent

The series of raised ribs at the lower ends of the handles, made with pincers while the glass was hot and malleable, are turned into a decorative feature.

PRB 1883.12.13.319

# POTTERY

The technology of ceramic production was thoroughly understood and highly developed in the Roman period. The sophisticated techniques used for the manufacture of domestic pottery included many which facilitated rapid, standardised and large-scale output.

Pottery was made wherever suitable clay was available, and was used, broken and discarded in large quantities; these sherds survive in the ground and provide abundant material for archaeological analysis. The evolution of a huge variety of vessel forms and surface treatments can be classified and dated, and the range of clays used identified by scientific analysis, so that researchers are able to build up a complex and detailed picture of manufacture, supply, use and chronology.

Distribution patterns of pottery types reveal that while much ordinary household earthenware was of local manufacture, certain types of pottery were traded over wide areas, not merely within a given province but across provincial boundaries.





**Face-urn and pedestalled bowl  
(tazza)**

2nd century AD  
Colchester, Essex

These are vessels of specialised, non-domestic use. The large urn is a container for cremated bones, while the tazza, with its decorative edgings, is likely to have been used in religious ritual.

PRB 1870.4-2.526  
PRB 1915. 12-8.34



**Infant's feeding-bottle**

1st century AD

London

Successful artificial feeding of babies was difficult in antiquity, but the existence of feeding bottles demonstrates that it did take place. Such bottles were not of standardised form, but were probably made to special order when required.

PRB 1871.7-14.3

Flagon

1st cent

London

This ta

Roman

f babies  
the

mortarium

1st century AD

London

strong mixing-bowls with a

roughened interior surface v

essential kitchen utensils. In



**Flagon**

1st century AD

London

This table vessel is a typical early Roman form. It was manufactured in Britain, at potteries in the Verulamium (St Albans) area.

PRB P.1973.7-2.19



### **Mortarium**

1st century AD  
London

Strong mixing-bowls with a grit-roughened interior surface were essential kitchen utensils. Ingredients often needed to be ground or puréed to create the subtly blended flavours characteristic of Roman food.

Mortaria were manufactured in Britain from the earliest years of Roman rule, and this example, stamped on the rim with the name of the manufacturer, Sollus, was made in the Verulamium region.

PRB P1973.7-2.16



**Black burnished ware**

This practical kitchen ware belongs to a tradition derived originally from a local Iron Age pottery industry in South-west England.

1st century AD

Exeter, Devon

PRB 1860.7-15.590

4th century AD

London

PRB 1856.7-1.83

4th century AD

London

PRB 1856.7-1.153



**Cheese press**  
Lower Halstow, Kent  
PRB 1883.12-13.424

**Rusticated jar**  
1st-2nd century AD  
Lincoln  
PRB 1866.12-3.60



### Imported fine wares

The three small table vessels are of Continental manufacture. The black-slipped cup with handles and the cup with scale decoration are both Gaulish, while the small beaker, an unusual import, was made in Spain.

2nd century AD

Bath, Avon

PRB 1828

1st century AD

London

PRB 1881.9-9.16

1st century AD

Twywell, Northamptonshire

PRB 1882.6-23.1



# USES OF POTTERY

Most pots were multi-purpose containers, or were made for one use and subsequently used for another, so it is often futile to try to define their exact function. Above all, they were used in great numbers for the storage, preparation and cooking of food, and some of the finer and more decorative varieties were designed for serving food at the table. As generalised containers, ceramic utensils served for the packaging and transport of many goods, and re-used earthenware vessels were also typical containers for the concealment or storage of coins and other valuables and for the burial of cremated bones.

Some specialised types of pottery indicate the adoption of elements of the Roman lifestyle, for example the large amphorae in which wine, oil and other luxuries such as prepared sauces and dried fruit were imported, or *mortaria*, bowls specially designed for pounding and puréeing ingredients to produce the complex blends of flavours typical of Roman cooking. Both these types of pottery started to appear in southern Britain before the conquest of AD 43, demonstrating the increasing Roman influence at that period.




### Lead-glazed pottery

Roman potters were familiar with true vitreous glazes, though they were not used frequently. The small relief-decorated flagon was made in Central Gaul, but the glazed bowl is a Romano-British product.

1st century AD  
Colchester, Essex  
PRB 1854.4-12.6

1st-2nd century AD  
Deanery Field, Chester  
PRB 1926.6-15.1





**Flagon**  
4th century AD  
London

This late-Roman Romano-British red ware with a burnished surface was manufactured at Hadham, Hertfordshire.

PRB 1915.12-8.46

**Money-box**  
4th century AD  
Lincoln

This purpose-made vessel contained coins of the early to mid-4th century AD.

PRB 1897.9-13.1



**1 Candlestick**  
 3rd to 4th centuries AD  
 Found at Binsted, Hampshire  
 Ceramic candlesticks held beeswax candles. This one was found in a stone sarcophagus.

**2 Open lamp**  
 Early 1st century AD  
 Found at Colchester, Essex  
 On the underside of this lamp is the maker's stamp 'FORTIO/F'.

P&E 18451 12 25.4  
 P&E 1879 4 2.565

**3 Volute lamp**  
 1st century AD  
 London  
 This lamp shows a satyr using a mortar. It is of Italian manufacture.  
 P&E 1970 7 2.3

**4 Volute lamp**  
 1st century AD  
 Colchester, Essex  
 Made in Gaul  
 P&E 1870 4 2.471

**5 Volute lamp**  
 1st century AD  
 London  
 The dark colour of this lamp is due to burning. The scene is of gladiatorial combat, and the lamp was made either in Gaul or Britain.

**6 Volute lamp**  
 1st century AD  
 Colchester, Essex  
 With a leaping horse similar to that of the adjacent Gaulish lamp, this example was made in Britain.

P&E 1870 4 2.697  
 P&E 1866 7 1.236

**7 Firmalampe**  
 2nd century AD  
 London  
 This shape, known by the German term *Firmalampe*, originated in northern Italy and became very popular in the northern provinces of the Empire. Makers' names are often found on the base. This example, with a tragic mask on the discus, was made in Italy.

P&E 1866 7 1.327

The dark colour of this lamp is due to

This shape, known by the German

# SAMIAN WARE

Samian ware is the name given to mass-produced red-gloss pottery made in Gaul. It belonged to a long tradition of fine tableware going back to Hellenistic prototypes and continuing till the late-Roman period with the red-slip wares of the North African provinces. The immediate forerunner of Gaulish samian was made at kilns in Italy, especially at Arezzo ('Arretine ware').

This class of pottery is important because the combination of known manufacturing sites, standardised forms, mould-made decoration and the appearance of potters' and workshops' names on many of the vessels makes close dating possible. It is a common find on British sites of the first and second centuries and provides a good chronological framework.

The ware was imported in quantity from the conquest to the end of the second century AD, after which its enormous popularity in the north-west provinces waned. In the first century samian from potteries in southern Gaul dominated the market and sometimes even reached sites in the Eastern Roman Empire. In the second century, most samian found in Britain was made in the Central Gaulish factories around Clermont-Ferrand, together with a few imports from east Gaul. The ware was also manufactured briefly, with only a local distribution, at Colchester.





Samian mortarium, Dr.45  
2nd century AD  
Made in Central Gaul  
PRR 1991.7.22.3

Samian vase  
2nd century AD  
Felixstowe, Suffolk  
The decoration consists of separately  
moulded applied reliefs (the leaves)  
and freehand trailed decoration.  
PRR 1991.6.26.9

Samian cups, Dr.27, 24/25 and 35  
1st century AD  
London  
PRR 1896.71.397, 414 and 422



5 and 35

**Samian bowl, Dr.29**  
1st century AD  
London

Manufactured in South Gaul, this is an example of the developed form of the characteristic first-century decorated bowl.

FRIG 1985.12.6.21

▲ **Samian bowl, Dr.37**  
1st century AD  
London

An early example of the hemispherical decorated bowl, this was made in South Gaul at La Graufesenque (near Millau), and carries stamps of the potter Mercata

FRIG 1982.12.11.1





▲ **Samian bowl, Dr.37**  
1st century AD  
London

An early example of the hemispherical decorated bowl, this was made in South Gaul at La Graufesenque (near Millau), and carries stamps of the potter Mercato.  
PRB 1931.12-11.1



**Samian dishes**

The three dishes are, respectively, a Dr.17 of Italian manufacture (Arretine ware), a South Gaulish Dr.15/17 of the 1st century AD, and a Dr.18/31 made in Central Gaul and dating to the later 2nd century.

London

PRB 1929.10.21.3  
PRB 1833.5-2.37

Herne Bay, Kent

Townley Collection, PRB 1814



▲ **Samian bowl, Dr.37**  
Late 2nd century AD  
Billingsgate, London

The decoration shows this to be a Central Gaulish product from Lezoux, near Clermont-Ferrand.

PRB 1921.7.22.4



▲ Samian bowl, Dr.37  
Late 2nd century AD  
Billingsgate, London

The decoration shows this to be a Central Gaulish product from Lezoux, near Clermont-Ferrand.

PRB 1921.7-22.4

▲ Samian bowl, Dr.37  
2nd century AD  
Ramsgate, Kent

Made in East Gaul, at Trier.

PRB 1921.7-11.1

Samian  
London  
Late 2nd

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samian wa  
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PRB 1961.4-5.3



▲ **Samian bowl, Dr.37**

2nd century AD  
Ramsgate, Kent

Made in East Gaul, at Trier.

PRB 1931.7-11.1

**Samian flanged bowl**

London  
Late 2nd century AD

This form, Dr.38, was popular in samian ware in the later 2nd century, but continued to be made in local Romano-British pottery in the late-Roman period.

PRB 1865.4-3.3



▲ **Samian vases, form Dr.30**  
Sandy, Bedfordshire  
1st century AD  
Castor, Cambridgeshire  
2nd century AD

The cylindrical decorated vase was far less common than the hemispherical bowl, but was made in all the principal Gaulish potteries. The earlier example is South Gaulish, and the larger 2nd-century vessel was made at Lezoux and displays the name-stamp of the workshop of Divixtus prominently in the decoration.

PRR 1944.9.28.2  
PRR 1953.1.10.5

**Fragments of bowl and mould**  
Late 2nd century AD  
Colchester, Essex

These are examples of samian ware made in Colchester, in a style which is closely related to some East Gaulish products. The mould, with its impressed motifs, illustrates the technique of manufacture.

On loan from Colchester Museum

# ULEY: THE TEMPLE OF MERCURY

Excavations at West Hill, Uley, Gloucestershire from 1977 to 1979 revealed evidence of a religious site which was probably in use from Neolithic times to the early Medieval period, and which in late-Roman times can be identified from the many votives and other finds as a temple to the god Mercury.

An Iron Age shrine and surrounding enclosure was replaced in the early second century AD by a stone-built Romano-Celtic temple, which was in turn enlarged in the fourth century. Around the temple were other buildings, including living quarters, guest accommodation and shops. By the fifth century AD, pagan worship at the site appears to have been replaced by Christianity.

The finds from the late-Roman heyday of the pagan temple include many *defixiones*, (curses written on lead tablets), limestone altars, votive gifts such as coins, jewellery and statuettes, and everyday objects - pottery, glass, metalwork and building materials. An outstanding discovery was the head and other fragments of the limestone cult-statue of Mercury accompanied by appropriate animals, a goat or ram and a cockerel. Large quantities of bones of sacrificial animals, mainly domestic poultry, sheep and goats, were also found.



A reconstruction of Uley with the Temple of Mercury.  
Drawing by Joanna Richards



### The Uley lead curses

At Uley almost 100 small thin rolled-up sheets of lead were found bearing Latin texts addressed to the god Mercury. Such lead tablets (*defixiones*), also found in large numbers in the sacred spring at Bath, are often referred to as 'curses' because of the nature of their texts: petitions for divine intervention against wrongdoers. Typically they are complaints of theft, and the god is asked to exact revenge or secure the return of stolen property, often being 'given' the property of the thief himself.

Whether the curses were written by professional scribes or the petitioners themselves is not yet clear, but the frequent use of set formulas and quasi-legal phraseology may have been intended to invest them with particular authority. The curses make fascinating reading, for they shed light on the personal possessions of the ordinary people of Roman Britain, as well as reminding us of the timeless problems of petty theft and crime.

The Uley lead curses

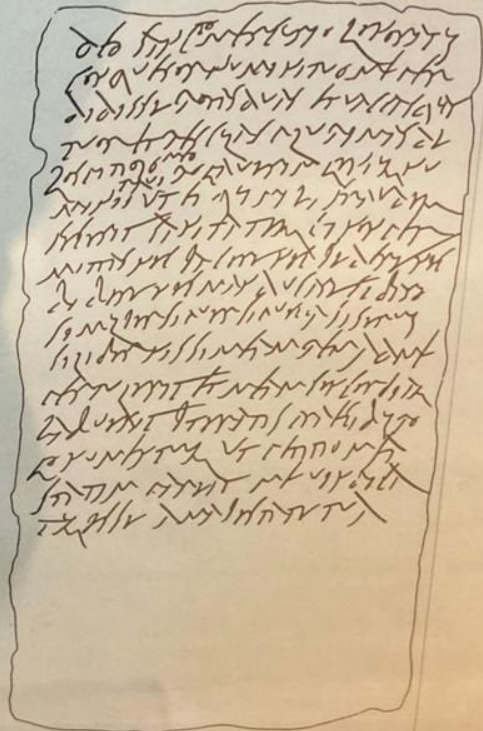
Whether the curses were written by professional scribes or the petitioners

Lead tablet  
Of some 140 lead tablets recovered

### Lead tablet

Of some 140 lead tablets recovered during excavations over 80 proved to have lightly incised writing on one or both sides. Most had been rolled and flattened like this one before being 'given' to the god. Before the text could be read, therefore, they had to be delicately unrolled and conserved. The texts are complex and highly specialised, and the translations and drawings included here are those of Dr Roger Tomlin, a leading specialist in this field.

PRB P.1978.1-2



### Inscribed Mid 2nd-3rd

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**Inscribed lead sheet ('curse tablet')**  
Mid 2nd-3rd century AD

This regular rectangular sheet, the best preserved tablet from the site, was folded six times after being neatly inscribed on one face in Old Roman Cursive script (a style of handwriting). The 16-line text was carefully written to avoid word breaks at the end of lines. It has been translated as 'Honoratus to the holy god Mercury. I complain to your divinity that I have lost two wheels and four cows and many small belongings from my house.

I would ask the genius of your divinity that you do not allow health to the person who has done me wrong, nor allow him to lie or sit or drink or eat, whether he is man or woman, whether boy or girl, whether slave or free, unless he brings my property to me and is reconciled with me. With renewed prayers I ask your divinity that my petition may immediately make me vindicated by your majesty'. The curse tablets highlight the difficulties of security in Roman Britain.

PRB P1978.1-2 (Invno.3740)

**Lead tablet**

Of some 140 lead tablets found during excavations have lightly incised both sides. Most have been flattened like this to be read, they could be read, they be delicately unrolled. The texts are complicated and the

I would ask the genius of your divinity that you do not allow health to the person who has done me wrong, nor allow him to lie or sit or drink or eat, whether he is man or woman, whether boy or girl, whether slave or free, unless he brings my property to me and is reconciled with me. With renewed prayers I ask your divinity that my petition may immediately make me vindicated by your majesty'. The curse tablets highlight the difficulties of security



**Inscribed lead sheet ('curse tablet')**  
2nd-3rd century AD

An irregular sheet inscribed on one side in Old Roman Cursive script by a practised hand, probably a scribe, using a metal nib. The text has been translated, 'The name of the thief who has stolen (my) bridle, whether free or slave, whether man or woman, is given to the god [...] two parts from his wife(?), a third to (his) health'.

Like so many of the tablets the context concerns the theft of a personal possession and an arrangement with the god to secure its return. Defects in the text include misspellings and confusions of commonplace formulae.

PRB P.1978.1-2. (Inv.no.2161)

Inscribed lead sheet  
2nd-3rd century AD

This regular rectangular sheet is the best preserved tablet of its kind. It was folded six times and inscribed on one face in Old Roman Cursive script (as shown in the drawing). The 16-line text was carefully written.

With renewed prayers I ask you  
[...]

to the god [...] two parts from his  
[...], a third to (his) health'.

Like so many of the tablets the context concerns the theft of a personal possession and an arrangement with the god to secure its return. Defects in the text include misspellings and confusions of commonplace formulae.

PRB P.1978.1-2. (Inv.no.2161)



### Inscribed lead sheet ('curse tablet') 3rd century AD

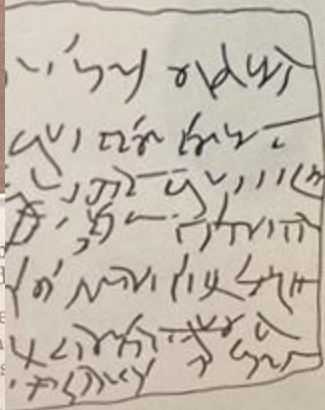
A lightly-incised text in idiosyncratic Old Roman Cursive script, written in seven lines on the inner face and one on the outer face. The tablet was then folded onto the inner text five times. The text reads, 'The sheet (of lead) which is given to Mercury, that he exact vengeance for the gloves which have been lost; that he take blood and health from the person who has stolen them; that he provide what we ask the god Mercury [...] as quickly as possible for the person who has taken these gloves'.

Apart from the reference to a 'sheet (of lead)', the first explicit instance of a curse tablet being named in that way, the main interest of this text lies in the stolen goods – gloves – the existence of which in Roman Britain is otherwise virtually unknown.

PRB P1978.1-2. (Invno. 4781)

Inscrib  
2nd-3rd

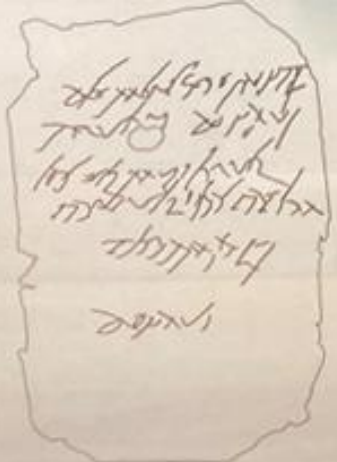
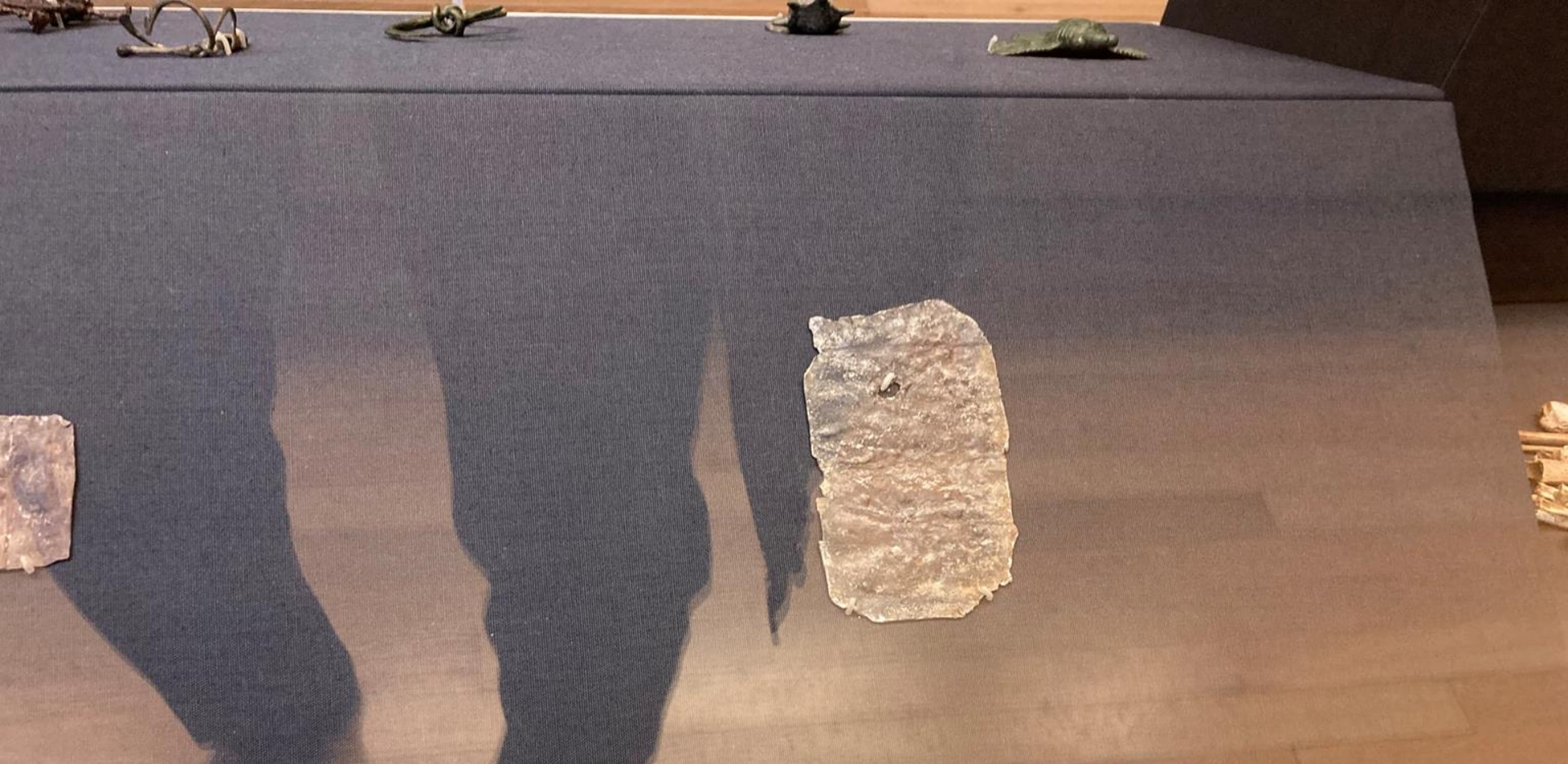
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taken these gloves'



**Inscribed lead sheet ('curse tablet')**  
2nd-3rd century AD

The sheet was folded five times after being inscribed on one side. The six-line text, in Old Roman Cursive script, reads 'Mintla Rufus to the god Mercury. I have given them, whether woman or [man], ... the material of a cloak. I have given (them)'. Perhaps despairing of the return of his cloth the petitioner 'gives' the thieves to the god – twice – presumably in the hope that they will receive divine retribution.

The petitioner's name is unusual and may or may not have had an intentional sexual connotation. The second part is unexceptional, but the first part is a colloquial Latin word for phallus. If it was not a neutral second name it may have been a composite name, 'Redprick'.

PRB P2978.1-2 (Accession 2228)

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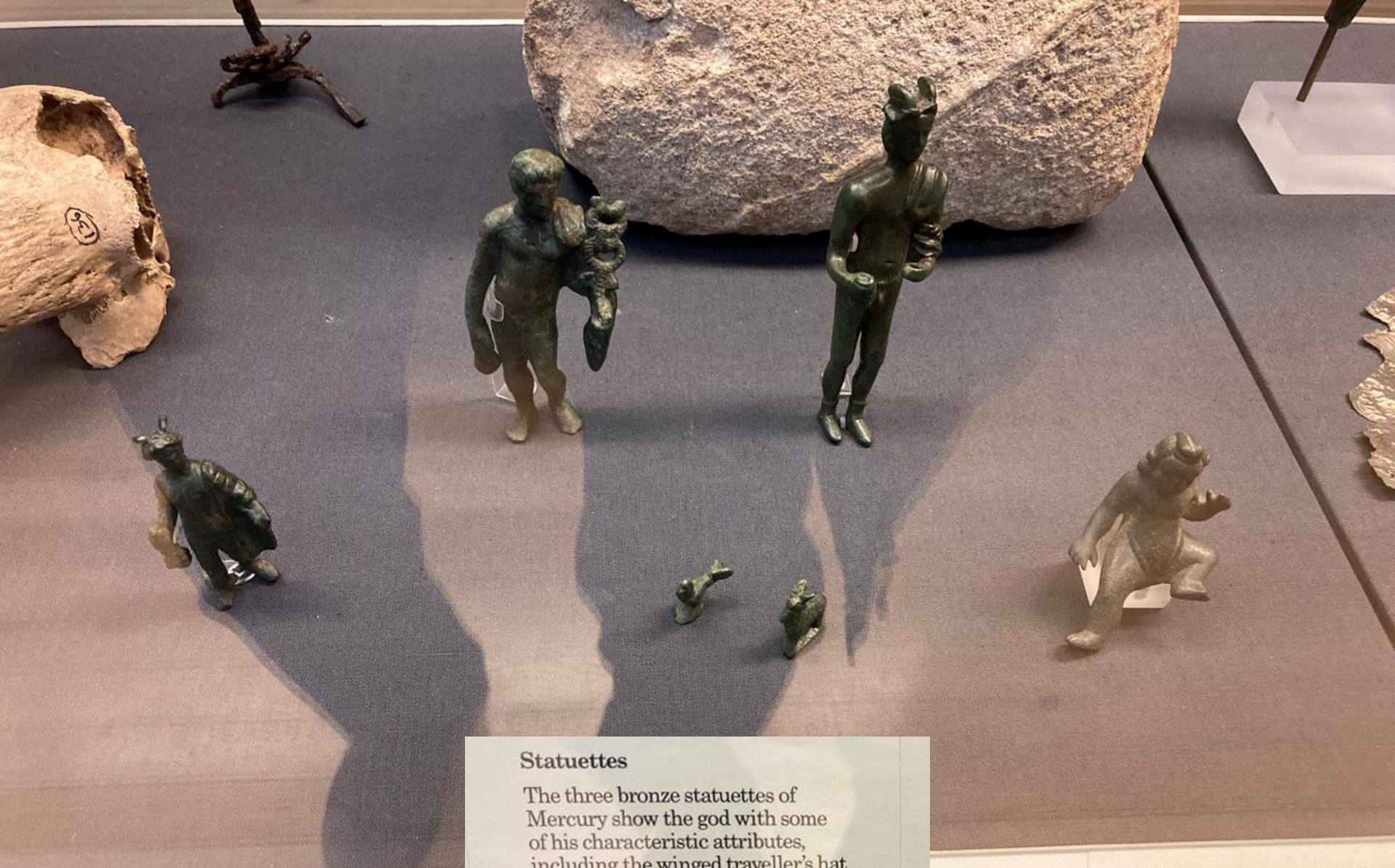
### The Uley Mercury

The principal cult-statue of the god Mercury which stood in the Uley temple was a little larger than life-size (approximately 2 m./6'10" tall), and stood on a base with two of the god's animal companions, a ram and a cockerel. Its appearance can be inferred from the survival on the site of several fragments, including the head, right knee and lower leg, the left thigh, and parts of the animals' bodies. The head, found in the 1979 season of work, had been carefully buried in the post-Roman phase of the buildings.

Carved in local Cotswold limestone, the Uley Mercury is an outstanding work in wholly Roman style, showing little or no sign of native British taste. The technical and stylistic details of the carving indicate that the statue was made in the later 2nd century AD by an artist who was totally familiar both with the Graeco-Roman iconographic tradition and with the distinctive nature of the local limestone.

The calm and serene expression of the face has survived the relatively minor damage to nose, mouth and brow: the only lost details which would have slightly altered its appearance are the small wings which probably rose directly from the curly hair.

PRB P1978.1-2.1



Bones of sheep/goat and domestic fowl  
 The bones shown here are a small selection from many found at the site. They represent the remains of sacrificial animals, and belong mainly to the late Iron Age.

**Statuette of Mercury**  
 The three Mercury statuettes are of his characteristic attributes, including the winged traveller's hat (*petasos*), the herald's staff (*caduceus*), and the purse.

**Statuettes**  
 The three bronze statuettes of Mercury show the god with some of his characteristic attributes, including the winged traveller's hat (*petasos*), the herald's staff (*caduceus*) and the purse; the animals are his cult creatures, the goat or ram and the cockerel. The statuette of a seated child probably represents the infant Bacchus.  
 PRB WH 1567, 1749, 5542, 1949, 1417, 8066

British sculpture, quite a simple one, but with some damage to the wings. Nevertheless, it is used as a model for the god.

**Objects from the temple of Mercury**  
 West Hill, Uley, Gloucestershire  
 Given by Major and Mrs. C.A. Goldingham  
 PRB P1978.1-2



### Limestone altar

Like much Romano-British sculpture, the altar is carved in quite a simple style, and this, together with considerable surface damage to the relief, makes the details of the decoration obscure. Nevertheless, the god can be recognised as Mercury: he has wings on his head, carries a herald's staff (*caduceus*) and is accompanied by a cockerel and a ram.

PRB WH 2761



**The Barkway hoard**  
Barkway, Hertfordshire  
3rd–4th century AD

This hoard consists of objects that probably came from a temple dedicated to the god Mars. There are six silver plaques, one silver-gilt plaque, a statuette of Mars and a bronze handle. It was found about 1743 in Barkway, Hertfordshire.

Given by Lord Selsey  
PY 1817, 0308. 1-9

**Statuette of Mars**

Mars was a god of fertility as well as of war. This very fine bronze statuette shows him as a youthful dancing figure. It suggests his connection with the coming of spring and the growing of crops.

PY 1817, 0308. 1





### Bronze handle

This broken handle was probably part of a rattle. It was used in religious ceremonies, just like the one from Felmingham, Norfolk (displayed in case 19, behind you).

PY 1817, 0308. 9

### Plaques dedicated to Mars

Five plaques show or name Mars. The largest has a dedicatory inscription to Mars Toutatis by Tiberius Claudius Primus, freedman of Attius. The gilded plaque, with an image of Mars before a temple, has an inscription to Mars Alator, by Censorinus, son of Gemellus. Toutatis and Alator were native gods. Combining Latin and Celtic god-names is a common feature of Romano-British religion.

PY 1817, 0308. 2.6



### Plaques dedicated to Mars

Two plaques show or name Mars. The first has a dedicatory inscription to Mars Toutatis by Claudius Primus, son of Attius. The gilded plaque with an image of Mars in a temple, has an inscription to Alator, by Censorinus, son of Mellus. Toutatis and Alator are native gods. Combining Latin and Celtic god-names is a common feature of Romano-British religion.

PY 1817, 0308, 24

### Plaque dedicated to Vulcan

Two plaques that show the Roman smith-god, Vulcan. He is identifiable by the hammer and tongs that he is holding and the hearth by his side.

One of the plaques is inscribed at the base NVVLCO, an abbreviation of Nu(mini) V(o)lc(an)o, meaning 'To the deity Volcanus'.

PY 1817, 0308, 7-8

### The Stony

This hoard was found in the 3rd-4th century. It consists of silver plaques with heads of priests, and plaques with Victory and

PY CA 252



**The Stony Stratford hoard**  
Stony Stratford, Buckinghamshire  
3rd–4th century AD

This hoard of temple treasure was found in a pottery urn in 1789. It consists of two ornate bronze headdresses, probably worn by priestesses, and numerous fragments of silver plaques. Many of the plaques were plain, but three on display here show Mars, Mars with Victory and Apollo.

PY OA 252

# THE ASHWELL HOARD: HOW CAN SCIENCE HELP?

Through recent radiography and conservation, the design, craftsmanship and writings of a Romano-British religious community have been brought to light.

When found the Ashwell hoard was corroded and encrusted with soil. It was impossible to see any of the detail of the original objects. X-radiography revealed not just the beauty of the objects but also the way they were made and used.

The X-ray image showed the intricate design of the pair of gold disc brooches. It also revealed that the four rectangular gem settings had a central perforation, seen as a lighter-coloured strip. From this it was possible to tell that the settings were made from reused beads, probably green glass in imitation of emeralds.

More information was revealed when the objects were cleaned. One of the silver plaques had a lightly incised script, visible only after painstaking conservation. Three other inscriptions came to light when five gold plaques, which had been stuck together in the ground, were separated. Gold does not corrode but is soft and easily damaged, so surface deposits were removed under a microscope. The brittle silver plaques survived in a worse condition and were pieced together from fragments. The original silvery surface is revealed under the corrosion.

**The Ashwell hoard**  
Ashwell, Hertfordshire  
3rd – 4th century AD

This exceptional find is a collection of objects dedicated by visitors to a shrine probably over a long period of time. As the most valuable part of a much larger number of temple votives it was probably buried for safekeeping at a time of unrest. Similar finds from Barkway and Stony Stratford are displayed in case 20.

PY 2003, 0901. 1-27

**Votive plaques**

Most of the objects in the hoard are votive plaques – thin sheets of metal with embossed and incised decoration given to a god or goddess in return for favours requested or already granted. Seven are gold and thirteen silver. They are of a type well known in Britain and other parts of the Roman Empire. Some are a simple slender triangle of 'leaf' or 'feather' appearance. Many show a god or goddess in a stylised temple surrounded by elaborate

decoration. Sometimes details of the gift were inscribed on the plaque. Most of the inscriptions name the goddess Senuna but the images are mainly of the goddess Minerva, who wears her normal crested helmet and holds a spear and shield. Senuna may have been likened to Minerva because she shared similar powers. The plaques were displayed in temple buildings and the projecting tab at the base of many may have been for holding them in a slotted stand.

PY 2003, 0901. 5-27





### Silver votive plaques

The hoard includes thirteen plaques made of silver alloyed with copper. They are brittle, corroded and damaged but would originally have shimmered in the half-light of a temple building. One is embossed with a detailed image of Roma, the female personification of Rome, seated among battle trophies, the sun-god Sol above her. Most show the goddess Minerva with her distinctive helmet, breastplate, spear and shield, standing in a temple. One has gilded highlights.

Five are inscribed to the goddess Senuna in fulfilment of vows made by devotees – one woman, Lucilia Sena, and three men, Lucius L(...) Herbonianus, (...) Firmanus and Servandus, son of Hispanus, who dedicated two near-identical plaques.

The mixture of Latin and Celtic names, men and women, citizens and non-citizens help us to imagine the nature of religious practise at this shrine in Roman Britain.

PY 2003, 0901, 15-27

### Silver figurine

The hollow figurine shows a woman in a full-length garment. It is heavily corroded and the arms and face are broken, but it was originally of high quality. An inscribed silver base, on which the figurine originally stood, was found nearby. It reveals that the figurine was a gift to the goddess Senuna and was probably intended as an image of her. It was dedicated to Senuna by a woman.

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PY 2003, 0901. 1

**Model arms**

Two finely-modelled arms made of cast silver with a core of tin-lead alloy. One hand holds a *phiale* – a dish used in religious ceremonies – the other grasps two ears of corn. The corn and *phiale* are highlighted by gilding. Like the other objects in the hoard the arms were probably gifts to the goddess Senuna.

PY 2003, 0901. 2-3



**Bronze strip**  
Farley Heath, Surrey

The narrow strip of bronze is thought originally to have been wound around a sceptre. The motifs on it are of almost child-like naivety, but are likely to have religious significance. They include a nude male figure, a wheel-like object, animals and birds, and apparently tools (tongs and perhaps an axe).

PRB 1936.3-11.1





### Miniature votive bronzes

Probably from Sussex

Miniature models of craftsmen's tools and implements were sometimes presented as votive gifts at religious shrines. This group consists of a plough, an adze, axes, saws, and the wards and bolts of locks.

PRB 1854.12-27.76-86



### Bronze clamp

Thames at London Bridge

The form of this unique object, found in 1840, closely resembles utilitarian iron veterinary implements used for gelding horses. It is decorated with busts of deities, and may have been used for the ritual castration of priests of Cybele.



**Altar to the mother-goddesses**  
1st-2nd century AD  
Winchester, Hampshire

This small altar, found in 1854, is dedicated to 'the Italian, German, Gaulish and British Mother-goddesses'. The dedicator, Antonius Lucretianus, was a *beneficiarius consularis*, a military official.

PRB 1866.7-1.5025



**Stone relief of three mother-goddesses**

2nd-3rd century AD  
Lincoln

Unlike the mother-goddesses of the Classical world, the native Mothers of Britain and Gaul were often represented in groups of three, seated and holding on their laps children or other attributes signifying fertility and good fortune, such as fruit or grain.

Given by J. Moore, Esq.  
PRB 1856.5-7.1



**Face-pot dedicated to Mercury**  
Lincoln

The dedication to the god Mercury is  
painted at the base of the vessel.

PRB 1866.12.3.47



#### Pipeclay statuettes

Mould-made pipeclay statuettes, generally depicting deities, were mass-produced in Gaul; most of the examples displayed here were made in the Allier Valley. Mother-goddesses and Venus were common subjects. Manufacturers' names were occasionally written in moulds and appear on the finished statuettes. Although probably intended for devotional purposes, as temple gifts or for household shrines, some of these figures, which were originally brightly painted, may have been used as toys by children.



#### Venus London

This Venus in a classic Roman pose is typical of those made in Central Gaulish workshops.

PRB 1854.11.30.42

#### Fragment of niche Colchester

This pipeclay finial comes from an architectural niche or aedicula, a small shrine for the display of a pipeclay statuette of a goddess.

PRB 1870.4.2.682



#### Bird Colchester, Essex

PRB 1870.4.2.466

#### Head of Rawret

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PRB 1856.7.3



**Head of a mother-goddess**  
Rawreth, Essex

The finely modelled head is from a very common type of pipeclay figurine which depicts a native Celtic mother-goddess seated in a basket-work chair, nursing a baby. A more complete example is displayed in case no.4

PRB 1856.7-1. 5108



**Minerva**  
London

The fragment is recognisable as Minerva because of her distinctive breastplate bearing the mask of Medusa.

PRB 1856.7-1.323



**Goddess**  
Bank of England, London

Though usually identified as Venus, this stylized figure wearing jewellery and possibly a long robe has little in common with the Roman goddess; she may represent a native Gaulish deity.

Given by the Governor & Company of the Bank of England  
PRB 1928.7-13.10



**Marble statuette of Bacchus**  
Spoonley Wood, nr. Winchcombe,  
Gloucestershire

The marble statuette shows Bacchus in a typical pose, rather languidly holding an empty wine-cup in his right hand and leaning against a tree-trunk which supports a fruiting vine. The god's panther is at his feet.

PRB 1910.6-25.1





**The Felmingham hoard**  
2nd-3rd century AD  
Felmingham Hall, Norfolk

The objects displayed here are part of a remarkable hoard of religious bronzes, possibly connected to a sun and sky cult, found in 1844 inside a large pottery cauldron. As in so many Romano-British temple assemblages, both Classical and native religious traditions are represented.

PRB 1925.6-10.1-32

**Heads of Jupiter and Minerva**

The hollow, bearded head of the Roman god Jupiter is made in two pieces. A separate wreath or diadem would originally have encircled the head and joined the pieces, and the eyes would have been filled with enamel to give a more life-like appearance.

The helmeted female head represents Minerva, the Roman goddess of war, wisdom, crafts and healing.

PRB 1925.6-10.1-2



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The helmeted female head represents Minerva, the Roman goddess of war, wisdom, crafts and healing.

PRB 1925.6-10.1-2

#### Birds and wheel

The birds holding round object, their beaks were originally mounted on some other object. One may be a dove, the other raven, an important bird of omen in Celtic religion but also linked to the Roman god Apollo. The wheel, a symbol of the sun or sky, was an object linked to the Celtic deity Taranis, who was sometimes equated with the Roman god Jupiter. Both were associated with the sky and thunder.

PRB 1925.6-10.7-9

#### Lar and headdress ornaments

The figurine of a young dancing Lar, a god who protected the household, is in purely Roman style. He holds a drinking-horn and a dish, part of the ritual equipment for making contact with the divine world.

The two bronze mounts probably come from headdresses similar to those from Hockwold shown in this case. The larger one, with halo, rays and crescent, is probably a combined image of two Roman

gods, Jupiter and the sun god, Sol. Other fragments of priestly regalia are included in the hoard.

PRB 1925.6-10.3,4,16

#### Bronze

The rare priestly ceremonial attention off dem used in

PRB 1925.6-



**Bronze headdresses**  
Hockwold cum Wilton, Norfolk

Diadems and other elaborate headgear are sometimes associated with religious sites and may be identified as part of priestly regalia. Hockwold is a Romano-Celtic temple site, though it is not certain which deities were worshipped there. The applied silver plaques on the low diadem are decorated in an extremely simple linear style: two show a handled vase flanked by two birds, which is a standard Bacchic device.

The centre plaque is of a naked male holding a sphere and a curved staff. In the context he is probably more likely to be a Celtic god than a player of a ball-game.

Given by the Ministry of Agriculture & Fisheries  
PRB 1966.10-11.1-3; 1967.2-6.1-3



**The Ashwell hoard**  
Ashwell, Hertfordshire  
3rd – 4th century AD

This exceptional find is a collection of objects dedicated by visitors to a shrine probably over a long period of time. As the most valuable part of a much larger number of temple votives it was probably buried for safekeeping at a time of unrest. Similar finds from Barkway and Stony Stratford are displayed in case 20.

PY 2003, 0901. 1-27

**Votive plaques**

Most of the objects in the hoard are votive plaques – thin sheets of metal with embossed and incised decoration given to a god or goddess in return for favours requested or already granted. Seven are gold and thirteen silver. They are of a type well known in Britain and other parts of the Roman Empire. Some are a simple slender triangle of 'leaf' or 'feather' appearance. Many show a god or goddess in a stylised temple surrounded by elaborate

decoration. Sometimes details of the gift were inscribed on the plaque. Most of the inscriptions name the goddess Senuna but the images are mainly of the goddess Minerva, who wears her normal crested helmet and holds a spear and shield. Senuna may have been likened to Minerva because she shared similar powers. The plaques were displayed in temple buildings and the projecting tab at the base of many may have been for holding them in a slotted stand.

PY 2003, 0901. 8-27

**Gold votive plaques**

Few votive plaques have been found anywhere in the Roman Empire and these are rare survivors. One decorated triangle. Five goddess Minerva in a stylised has a beautifully-worked the winged figure of Victoria of the Minerva images are have been struck from the die.

Four plaques have incised or punched inscriptions, which were added when they were dedicated.



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PY 2003, 0901. 8-27

#### Gold votive plaques

Few votive plaques of gold have been found anywhere in the Roman Empire and these seven are rare survivors. One is a small decorated triangle. Five show the goddess Minerva in a shrine. One has a beautifully-worked image of the winged figure of Victory. Two of the Minerva images appear to have been struck from the same die.

Four plaques have incised or dot-punched inscriptions, which were added when they were dedicated to

the goddess Senuna. They preserve the names of some of her devotees – one woman, Cariatia Ressa, and three men, Claudius Celsus, Claudius Vinomius and Bell(icius) Memorianus.

PY 2003, 0901. 8-14



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# THE WATER NEWTON TREASURE

This hoard of silver vessels and plaques was found in 1974 at Water Newton, the Roman town of *Durobrivae*, near Peterborough, Cambridgeshire. It constitutes the earliest-known group of Christian silver from the Roman Empire.

The hoard, much damaged by the plough, consists of nine vessels, a number of silver votive plaques, and a gold disc. Many of the objects bear the chi-rho monogram, the first two letters of Christ's name in Greek and the symbol most commonly used by early Christians. Three objects carry longer inscriptions giving the names of their dedicators, Publianus, and three women, Ancilla, Innocentia and Viventia. They were indisputably intended for religious use, and the religion in question was Christianity.

Individual pieces in the treasure were probably made at different times and in different places. It is impossible to establish closely the date at which they were hidden, although it would have been in the 4th century AD. The concealment may have been in response to specific persecution of Christians or more general political instability.





#### Silver strainer

Round-bowled strainers of various sizes occur in many late-Roman hoards of domestic silver. They were used to strain the sediment from wine as it was poured into a drinking vessel. This example features Christian symbols on the disc at the end of the handle.

P&E 1975 10 2 9



#### Decorated silver jug

This richly decorated silver jug originally had a handle, of which only one damaged fragment of the rim-attachment (displayed alongside it) was found. Jugs and flagons in various shapes were popular in the late-Roman period. The elaborate decoration of leaves and acanthus scrolls in low relief is now closely paralleled on the small jug and beaker in the Hoxne treasure (see case 23).

P&E 1975 10 2 1



#### The chi-rho symbol

Early Christians did not denote their faith using the sign of the cross, on which Christ was crucified. That came later. Instead they used the chi-rho symbol. This consists of the first two letters of Christ's name in Greek; the Chi, which looks like a Latin 'X', and the Rho, which looks like a 'P'.

Often, but not always, this symbol was combined with the first and last letters of the Greek alphabet:

the alpha (α), and omega (ω). These are a reference to a verse in the Bible: 'I am Alpha and Omega'.



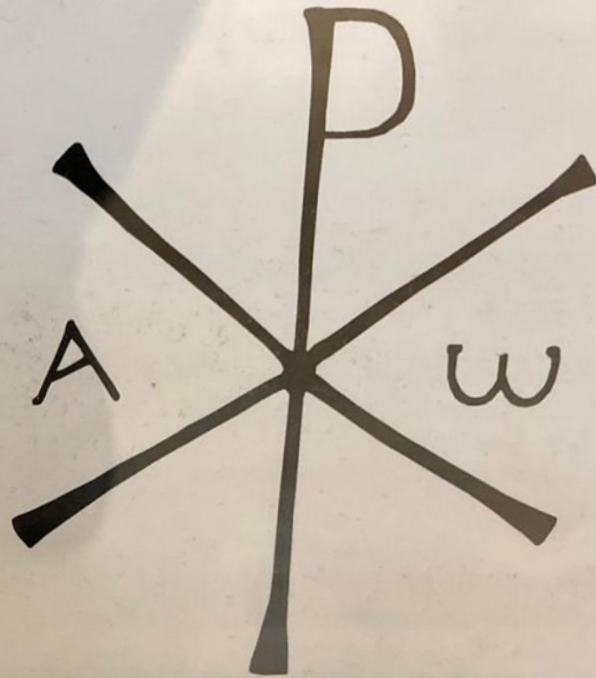
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### Votive silver plaques

The silver plaques belong to the same tradition as the pagan examples from Barkway, Stony Stratford and Ashwell, shown in cases 19 and 20 (Pagan Religions). However, these inscribed examples from Water Newton are clearly Christian. Several have the chi-rho monogram and alpha and omega. In many cases individual letters are reversed or misunderstood, and we may infer that the craftsman was not familiar with the Greek alphabet. One has a longer

inscription, recording that 'Amcilla has fulfilled the vow which she promised'.

It is likely that the plaques were pinned up somewhere in the church, or placed on the altar, giving thanks to God. This practice continues in many orthodox Christian countries, where icons are surrounded by metal votive plaques. However, these days they are usually made of base metal rather than of gold or silver.

P&E 1975 10-2 10-27

Right: some modern day votives pinned around an icon in a Greek orthodox church.



### Large silver dish or paten?

The simple shape of this dish, without a foot-ring, is not at all typical of late-Roman silver (see, for example, the Mildenhall treasure in Case 22). The lines for a large Christian monogram flanked by an alpha and omega have been lightly marked out in the central circle of the dish. They may have been guidelines for deeper engraving that was never carried out.

This dish is arguably the earliest church paten ever to be discovered.

It bears strong similarities to patens produced in the 6th and the 7th centuries and used in church for the distribution of communion bread. The idea that it served a similar function is an intriguing possibility.

P&E 1975 10-27



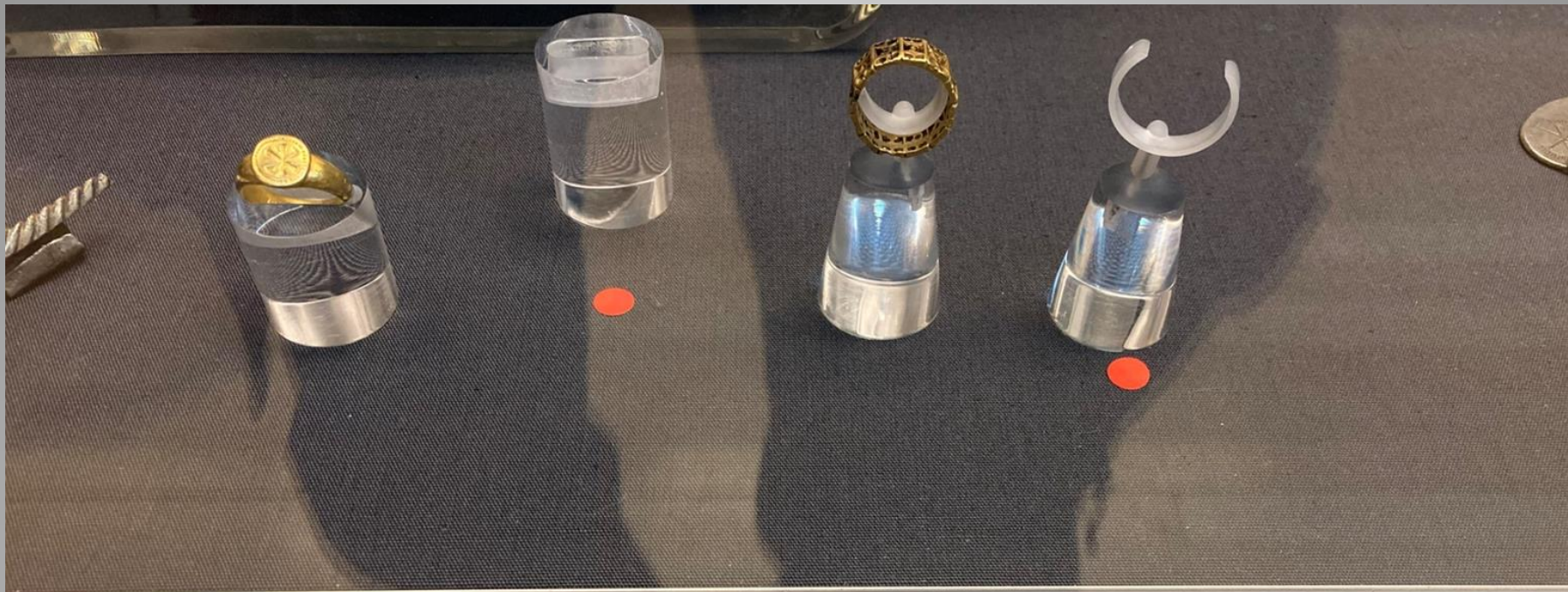
**Inscribed silver cup or bowl with the name of Publianus**

This inscribed cup or bowl is a key piece in the Water Newton treasure because the inscription tells us that it belonged with a Christian church. This was probably a small chapel or part of a private house, possibly near to where the treasure was found. Unfortunately, the location of this building is not known.

The cup bears the personal name Publianus, which is inscribed on the underside of the base. Around the

rim is the line SANCTUM ALTARE TUUM DOMINE SUBNIXUS HONORO engraved alongside two chi-rho monograms. The sentence is a regular hexameter, a line of poetry rather than prose. Its exact meaning in the context of early Christian ritual is still the subject of debate. It could be translated as: 'O Lord, I Publianus, relying on you, honour your holy altar [or church].'

Drawing by P. Compton  
P&E 1975 10-2 5



tian

**Gold rings with chi-rho symbol**  
Suffolk; Brentwood, Essex  
4th century AD

Both rings bear the chi-rho symbol that indicates they belonged to a Christian. The designs are engraved in reverse, as they are intaglios, used to mark wax seals. On one, a bird sits in a fruiting tree. This was a motif quite common in Christian art and also associated with the Roman god of wine, Bacchus.

P&E 1983 10-3 1; 1984 10-1 1

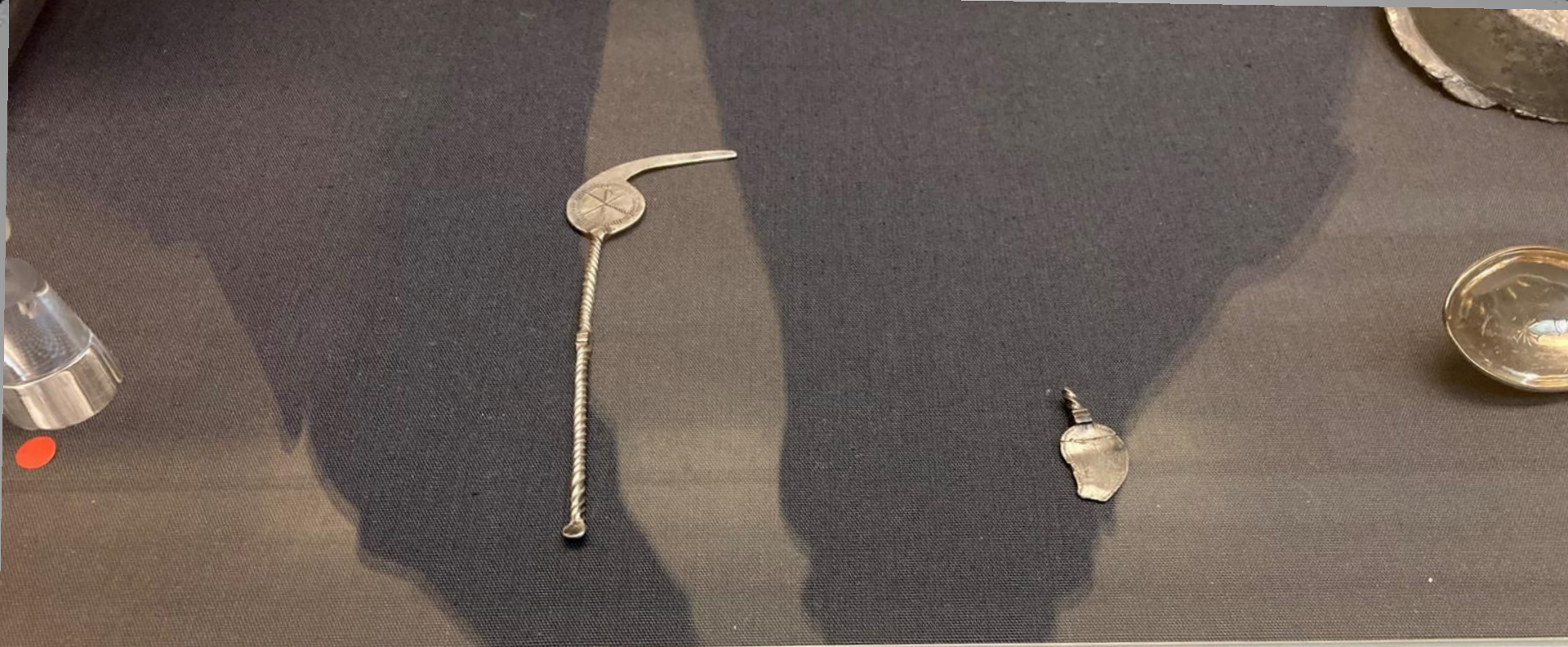
**Gold openwork finger rings**  
Corbridge, Northumberland;  
Queen's Park, Bedfordshire  
2nd-4th century AD

These finger rings have openwork inscriptions. One, in Greek, translates as 'the love-token of Polemios'. The ring may have been a marriage token, and the form of the inscription suggests a Christian betrothal. The second translates 'Eusebius, may you live', a common Christian phrase.

P&E loan 12.2 1947 (on loan from English Heritage);  
P&E 1980 10-1 1

**Silver talisman**  
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### Silver tableware and implements with Christian symbols

Christian symbols and inscriptions are also found on tableware, such as spoons, and occasionally on implements used for grooming, such as toothpicks. Why these objects bore Christian symbols is unclear. It may have been to show that the owners were Christian. Silver spoons were perhaps used to distribute communion wine in Christian ceremonies. Or these items may have been presented as christening gifts.

### Silver toothpicks with Christian monogram

Ancaster, Lincolnshire; Canterbury Kent (electrotype)  
4th century AD

Curved silver implements of this type are believed to be toothpicks. Many bear Christian inscriptions. One has a chi-rho monogram scratched on each side, probably added by the owner rather than made at the time of manufacture. The other has a punched chi-rho.

Given by K. Tebb, Esq.  
P&E 1991 6-1 1; 1962 11-08 14 (electrotype)

### Silver spoon

Biddulph, Staffordshire  
4th to early 5th century

This spoon has a specific to Christ in the form of the chi-rho symbol, the first letters of Christ's name in Greek. The symbol is flanked by the last letters of the Greek alphabet, alpha and omega, from the beginning and the ending of the Lord' (Revelations 1: 8)

P&E 1971.0501.1



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**Pewter dish**  
Appleshaw, Hampshire  
4th century AD

This dish is part of a hoard of 32 pewter vessels found buried in a building in 1897. On the underside within the foot-ring is a lightly incised chi-rho motif. This would suggest that the owner of this dish was a Christian.

P&E 1897 12-18 28

**Oval pewter dish**  
Appleshaw, Hampshire  
4th century AD

Rectangular or oval serving dishes decorated with fish are known in both silver and pewter. They were probably intended for serving fish at the table. However, the presence of Christian inscriptions on fine tableware of the 4th century and the fact that the fish was an early, cryptic symbol of the new religion suggest a religious meaning.

P&E 1897 12-18 32

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**Three pewter cups or bowls**  
Icklingham, Suffolk  
4th century AD

One pedestal bowl has incised rings on a flanged rim, under which is the incised name LICINIVS, probably the bowl's owner. The conical cup or beaker is unusual but was, occasionally, also made in silver. The third cup has cast raised beads on its rim that recall the hollowed beads often worked on the borders of contemporary silver plate.

# LEAD AND PEWTER IN ROMAN BRITAIN

Lead and tin, the two principal constituents of pewter, were readily available in Britain. Evidence of extensive lead mining is found, for example in the Mendip Hills in the south-west. Limestone moulds for large scale pewter production are evident in some areas, such as the Bath region. Ingots have also been found. Table vessels resembling contemporary silver plate were manufactured in this alloy, especially in the late Roman period. Pewter objects appear to have been produced in large numbers and are often found in hoards.

How pewter vessels were used is not clear. Some view them as 'poor man's silver', resembling silver tableware such as that found at Mildenhall (see case 22). Lead however is very soft, and not entirely suitable for objects intended for eating and drinking. Few vessels show signs of wear that might be expected from such heavy use. Others think that they were made for religious reasons. Some vessels have Christian symbols, suggesting early church use. Others found in rivers and similar watery sites were possible offerings to pagan gods thought to live in water.



**Large pewter plate**  
Appleshaw, Hampshire  
4th century AD

One of a hoard of 32 pewter vessels from Appleshaw, near Andover. This large plate has elaborate geometric decoration similar to that seen on some silver dishes of the same type. Its edge is decorated with nicking, perhaps imitating the more accomplished beading found on silver vessels (see the Mildenhall treasure in Case 22, for example).

P&E 1897.12.18.10

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# THE CORBRIDGE LANX

This magnificent silver plate was found by nine-year old Isabel Cutler in the bank of the River Tyne at Corbridge, near Hadrian's Wall, in February 1735. The lanx (Latin for 'tray') was owned by the dukes of Northumberland until the British Museum acquired it in 1993.

The meaning of the decoration on the lanx has always been debated. The scene is clearly a shrine of the god Apollo. He stands at the shrine's entrance on the right, with his lyre at his feet. His twin sister Artemis, the hunter goddess, enters from the left. The helmeted goddess with her arm raised is Minerva. The scene may be set on the shrine on the Greek island of Delos, the birthplace of the twins Apollo and Artemis. The seated older woman could then be Leto, the mother of the twins, and the standing woman her sister Ortygia.

Given by the Secretary of State for National Heritage, with the aid of generous grants from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, The Art Fund and the British Museum Friends.

standing woman her sister Ortygia.

Given by the Secretary of State for National Heritage, with the aid of generous grants from the National Heritage Memorial Fund, The Art Fund and the British Museum Friends.

P&E 1993 4-1 1



NATIONAL  
HERITAGE  
MEMORIAL  
FUND



The temple of Leto on the sacred island of Delos, at the centre of the Greek islands known as the Cyclades. Delos was the birthplace of the twins Apollo and Artemis, both of whom are shown on the lanx.

Photo: © TSNM Images

### Discovery of the Corbridge *lanx*

The *lanx* was found in 1735, which makes its survival into the modern era remarkable. Other late-Roman silver vessels were recovered in the vicinity between 1731 and 1760. Some were sketched or described, but only the *lanx* has survived. The other pieces were probably melted down, a common fate for silver at the time.

It is highly probable that erosion of the river bank in the 18th century washed out parts of a 4th-century

silver hoard. One at least of the lost objects bore Christian symbols. It may be therefore that the treasure is similar to that from Mildenhall, with its combination of pagan decoration and Christian references (see Case 22).

Modern view of the River Tyne and the bridge at Corbridge, the area in which the *lanx* was found

### The significance of the Corbridge *lanx*

The scene on the *lanx* depicts a shrine to Apollo, Greek god of music and health. It shows the continuing influence of classical mythology even as late as the 4th century AD, by when Christian imagery was becoming increasingly popular (see Case 18).

Although the *lanx* may have been used to serve food, it was probably for display mainly, perhaps to show that the wealthy owner was educated

and well-read. It is even possible that the design on the *lanx* was intended to ensure that Greek and Roman myths continued to be understood.

Engraving of the Corbridge *lanx* by G. van der Gucht, published 1736



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Engraving of the Corbridge *lanx* by G. van der Gucht,  
published 1736





**Silver dish**  
Mileham, Norfolk  
4th century AD

The Mileham dish was found in 1839. There is no record of other objects being associated with it, although it is tempting to assume that it was part of a hoard. Large silver platters of angular form, either rectangular, square or octagonal, became popular in the 4th century.

# EATING & DRINKING: STOREROOM TO TABLE

This display is dedicated to eating and drinking in Roman Britain. It includes containers for food and drink typical of a household larder or the storeroom of a military fort, alongside artefacts for preparing and cooking food, and utensils and vessels used at the dining table.

A common perception of Roman mealtimes is of guests reclining on couches. Despite some general statements from Roman authors, there is little evidence to support this view of dining in Roman Britain. Most people probably continued to take meals just as they did before the Romans arrived. This may often have meant sitting on the floor, sometimes using low wooden tables.

However, Roman-style town houses and rural villas such as that at Lullingstone in Kent (see the gallery wall opposite) sometimes have rooms identified as *triclinia* (dining rooms). The wealthy often chose to have attractive mosaic flooring at the centre of their *triclinium*. Here couches were probably used, arranged around the mosaics so that guests could view them as they ate, drank and relaxed.



Stone carving on a Roman monument at Igel, Germany, about 3rd century AD.

In the centre a dinner party consisting of two couples is in progress — the men recline on a couch, the women sit in wicker chairs. To the left servants refill containers in a pantry. To the right, more servants are washing up.



#### Storing food and drink

Pottery vessels were used to store many kinds of food, from locally produced grain to imported wine and olive oil.

In the absence of refrigerators or artificial preservatives, food might be dried, preserved in oil, fermented, salted or smoked. Thick pottery walls kept food cool and safe in transit, and narrow necks could be plugged to keep pots airtight and free of insects. Storerooms might have raised floors to allow air to circulate and

keep rodents away. Alternatively, jars might be sunk into the cool ground.

Complete amphorae, but more often fragments, are common finds on Roman sites. Occasional finds even come from shipwrecks – there was a flourishing sea trade between Britain and the Mediterranean, which had its origins long before the Roman invasion in AD 43. Most of these amphorae and their contents came from France or Spain.

**Amphora**  
Headcorn, Kent  
3rd to 4th centuries AD

Amphorae of this shape usually contained wine. The spike on the bottom made them stronger and easier to carry, pour, and be stacked in the holds of ships.

P&E 1947 2-2 1



Exceptionally well-preserved wooden amphora rack at Herculaneum, Italy, 1<sup>st</sup> century AD.



### Food preparation

Mortaria were the food processors of Roman times. Abrasive flint grits were incorporated in their inner surface during manufacture. Pestles of stone or wood were then used to crush different foodstuffs and spices. A spout in the rim allowed the contents to be poured out.

Mortaria were not only used to crush dry foods, but also to blend sauces. They may also have been used for cheese-making – the spout for pouring off whey, and the grits to retain bacteria needed in the process.

Alongside mortaria, the Romano-British kitchen equipment included the rotary quern for turning wheat into flour. This consisted of two close-fitting heavy stones secured on a central spindle. The lowest one was fixed, whilst the upper one was rotated with a handle to grind the wheat.

Actual foodstuffs only survive on Roman sites in exceptional circumstances. Burnt ('carbonised') grain is the most common form of preservation.

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**Emmer wheat and carbonised grain**

These samples are from Butser ancient farm, Hampshire, an experimental project researching into agriculture in prehistoric and Roman times.

**Oyster shells**

Oyster shells are commonly found in considerable quantities on Romano-British sites, so oysters were clearly popular. Juvenal, writing in the 1st century AD, commented that British oysters



### Cooking

Much Roman cooking was done on a raised brick hearth. On top of this a charcoal or wood fire was built, above which stood tripods or gridirons (an example can be seen in Case 16). On the hot metal fish and meat could be cooked direct or cooking vessels placed.

Most of the cooking methods with which we are familiar today were used in Roman Britain. Frying with butter, lard or olive-oil, was done in flat pans of very similar appearance to modern frying pans.

Meat, vegetables and sauces were boiled or simmered in large cauldrons or deep pans. And whole pieces of meat would have been spit-roasted over an open fire.

Ovens have been discovered on many Roman sites, from villas to military forts. They were often built from tiles with a flue to provide a through draught. The ash from wooden fires would have been raked out, the food placed inside and the entrance sealed to retain the heat.

Clay cooking pot  
Stonea, Cambridge  
Late 2nd to early

The blackening on  
shows it was used

P&E 1985 2-1.1930

Copper-alloy frying  
Wootton, Surrey  
1st to 4th centuries

Donated by H.C. Evelyn  
P&E 1915 4-6.10



Object removed for loan  
Copper-alloy jug  
Museum no. 100.10.1  
On long term loan to Tullie House Museum,  
Carlisle, 3 May 2011 to present.

### Eating and drinking

A range of vessels were used in Roman Britain at meal times. At all social levels, pottery plates, bowls and cups were used (see Case 21). Most were relatively cheap and easy to clean or replace if broken.

At the higher end of society, metal vessels were used, although probably only on special occasions. Silver plates, bowls and platters, like those discovered at Mildenhall, may have been brought out to impress guests.

For drinking, glass beakers were another luxury item, as were elegant metal jugs for wine and water.

As for cutlery, spoons were essential as sauces were such an important component of meals. There is little evidence however for forks. Pointed spoon handles might be used instead, for instance to extract shellfish. Diners usually used their own personal knives. But cutlery in any case was often irrelevant: most of the time people simply used their fingers.



Object removed for loan

Copper-alloy jug  
SEP 1814.0705.37

On long term loan to Tullie House Museum,  
Carlisle, 3 May 2011 to present.



- 3 **Bronze pan**  
2nd century AD  
Prickwillow, Isle of Ely,  
Cambridgeshire

This beautiful vessel was made by a craftsman named Boduogenus. His Celtic name (either Gaulish or British), is stamped across the handle. The decoration of the handle, with copper and niello inlay, features natural and mythical sea-creatures, and a design of vine and ivy, all probably of Bacchic inspiration.

P&E 1893 6-18 14

- 4 **Bronze handle**  
1st-2nd century AD  
Colchester, Essex

This cast handle from a deep pan is inscribed with the maker's name, probably Pomponius.

P&E 1870 4-2 184

- 5 **Bronze jug**  
2nd century AD  
Carlisle, Cumbria

Bronze jugs were used for both domestic and religious purposes.

P&E Townley Collection 1814

- 6 **Spoons and knives**  
1st to 3rd centuries AD  
London; Colchester, Essex;  
Gloucestershire; Helpston,  
Cambridgeshire

Spoons for serving and eating food were made in copper, bone, and sometimes silver. The most ornate example (top) has a handle in the form of a seated Cupid.

Knives were usually made of iron, sometimes with bone handles.

P&E 1856 7-1 1121; 1862 2-12 7; 1870 4-2 195-6;  
1889 2-1 6; 1896 5-1 46; 1934 12-10, 42; 1984 5-1 1

# IRONWORKING IN ROMAN BRITAIN

Ironworking was widespread in Britain by the later Iron Age. Indeed, iron was listed as a British export by the Greek author Strabo shortly before the Roman invasion. However, with the incorporation of Britain into the Empire large-scale production was achieved. Ores were available in most parts of the country and iron became the cheapest metal. Most blacksmiths would have bought their raw material from smelters in the form of ingots or rods. Another source was scrap metal; broken or worn iron objects could be taken to the smith for re-forging.

Unlike other metals, iron was not cast in the Roman period. Instead, the blacksmith forged it in a semi-solid, red-hot state using hammer and tongs. Thin iron sheet was joined with rivets, but the normal joining technique was welding at white heat. Various hardening techniques were known, and steeled cutting edges were sometime welded to tools and weapons. Few of these techniques were new, and it was not the case that a poor Iron Age technology was replaced by a superior Roman one. Rather existing skills were adapted to changed circumstances, notably a new and highly-organised trading network.





**1 Two metalworker's hammer-heads**  
 1st-2nd century AD  
 Camerton, Somerset/  
 Dowgate, London

Both these have been heavily used. One still has the remains of a hazelwood handle held in place with a nail.

PHB P1982.1.3.250, 1870.10.13.33

**2 Tongs**  
 1st-2nd century AD  
 Camerton, Somerset/Near Gloucester

Only one handle of the larger example remains. The smaller one would have been used for handling small pieces of hot metal for fine work or the manufacture of small objects.

PHB P1982.1.3.250, 1870.10.13.33

**3 Metalworker's file with fine teeth**  
 1st-2nd century AD  
 Dowgate, London

Given by F. G. d'Alquila, Esq.  
 PHB 1867.12.4.3

**4 Blacksmith's chisels for cutting hot metal**  
 Camerton, Somerset

PHB P1982.1.3.252.3

**5 Carpenter's solid-handled mortise chisel with battered head**  
 1st century AD, Hod Hill, Dorset

PHB P1982.9.1.1365

**6 Carpenter's firmer chisel with solid handle**  
 4th century AD  
 Sandy Hoard, Bedfordshire

Given by F. Ratneson, Esq.  
 PHB 1915.12.4.336

**8 Carpenter's gouge**  
 Probably 1st-2nd century AD  
 Camerton, Somerset

The socketed gouge was a general-purpose carpentry tool widely used in Iron Age and Roman Britain.  
 PHB P1982.1.3.230

**9 Carpenter's paring chisel**  
 Probably 1st-2nd century AD

PHB P1982.1.3.230



**8 Carpenter's gouge**

Probably 1st-2nd century AD  
Camerton, Somerset

The socketed gouge was a general-purpose carpentry tool widely used in Iron Age and Roman Britain.

FRB F282.1.4.229

**9 Carpenter's paring chisel**  
Probably 1st-2nd century AD  
Walbrook, London

The thin-bladed paring chisel was a hand-pushed finishing tool. This example is stamped with the maker's name, *MARTIALIS*.

Given by the Charity Trustees  
2004.12.31.40

**10 Double-ended spatula with decorative handle**  
London

This is believed to have been used for spreading wax onto wax tablets.

FRB 1866.7.1.1343

**11 Crowbar**  
Probably 1st century AD  
Walbrook, London

Such bars were used as case-breakers or as levers for moving heavy loads.

Given by F. G. d'Agalla, Esq.  
FRB 1955.11.6.1

**12 Cobbler's last**

Probably 4th century AD  
Sandy Hoard, Bedfordshire

The last was a form of anvil which projected from the cobbler's bench. On it he stitched shoes and hammered in hobnails.

Given by F. Ramson, Esq.  
FRB 1905.12.4.329

**13 Awl**

Probably 1st-2nd century AD  
London

The awl was primarily a cobbler's tool used for piercing hides and leather. Exceptional conditions have preserved this example intact. It has an iron point, a bronze collar and a carefully turned handle of boxwood.

FRB 1856.7.1.1207

17



17 Adze-head  
Probably 1st century AD  
Camerton, Somerset

Adzes were widely used in carpentry in Iron Age and Roman Britain, especially for preparing planks and beams. Often the tool was provided with a hammer head behind the shaft hole. On this example the head is burred through use.

PRB 1982.1.3.234

18



18 Adze-hammer with reconstructed handle  
Late 1st century AD  
Bull's Wharf, London

The adze-hammer was the boatwright's most important tool. It was also in common use by carpenters. Waterlogged conditions have preserved the original appearance of this fine specimen.

Given by F. G. d'Aquila, Esq.  
PRB 1966.4.3.1

19



19 Military axe (*dolabra*) with reconstructed wooden handle  
1st century AD  
Hod Hill, Dorset

On campaign the legionary soldier carried a range of equipment and tools as well as his weapons. One of these was the *dolabra*, used for felling and construction.

PRB 1892.9.1.1250

26





**21 Axe-head**  
1st century AD  
Camerton, Somerset

The head from a large military axe of extremely fine workmanship. Such axes were used above all to fell trees. This example was stamped with a short inscription, probably a maker's mark, but it is now illegible.

FRS P1982.1.3.231

**22 Axe-head**  
Provenance unknown

The commonest form of Roman axe, used by carpenter and forester alike. Clearly visible on this example is a weld-line, showing that the cutting edge, probably of hardened metal, was welded on separately.

Given by J. Freutwich, Esq



**21 Axe-head**  
1st century AD  
Camerton, Somerset

The head from a large military axe of extremely fine workmanship. Such axes were used above all to fell trees. This example was stamped with a short inscription, probably a maker's mark, but it is now illegible.

PHS P2892.1-3.231

**22 Axe-head**  
Provenance unknown

The commonest form of Roman axe, used by carpenter and forester alike. Clearly visible on this example is a weld-line, showing that the cutting edge, probably of hardened metal, was welded on separately.

Given by J. Prestwich, Esq

**23 Three hipposandals**  
1st-4th century AD  
London

Nailed horse shoes were known but rarely used by the Romans. Hipposandals were a form of temporary shoe which could be tied to the hoof for use on metalled roads and easily removed when not required. They were probably for draught or carriage animals - horses, ponies,

here with a horseshoe-shaped strip welded to the base. Because great pressure was exerted by the hoof, hipposandals had to be strong, and the side wing of the enigmatic half hipposandal here has been secured to the base by means of a cleft weld, the strongest weld used by Roman smiths.

PHS 1866.74.1272.1864.3-16.43  
(Given by the Metropolitan Board of Works); 1866.74.1274

**24 Hoe**  
Late 1st century AD  
Waltham, London

A heavy two-tined hoe (*bidentis*). Though mentioned by many Roman writers on agriculture few of the implements have been found.

Given by F. G. d'Alipho, Esq.  
PHS 1865.74.1

military  
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and pointed  
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hard ground,  
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# THE BLACKSMITH'S WARES

Blacksmiths made their own tools of iron and supplied many of their fellow craftsmen with the tools of their trades. They provided farmers with agricultural implements, clerks with styli, market traders with steelyards and balances, householders with domestic utensils and a host of other customers with objects of everyday use. Some blacksmiths specialised in a particular product, like the military smiths, who made weapons and armour, locksmiths or cutlers. Some signed their wares with manufacture stamps, like OLONDUS, a London cutler, and MARTIALIS, who made chisels.

The Roman blacksmith seldom made horseshoes, as nailed shoes were rarely used. Instead, draught animals were sometimes given temporary shoes - 'hipposandals' - which could be lashed to the hooves. Much more of the smith's time would have been spent making nails, and one of the few Roman innovations was a nail-heading tool. This permitted mass-production, graphically demonstrated in the discovery at the legionary fortress at Inchtuthil, Perthshire, of a hoard of a million nails.

Occasionally, however, there was scope for decoration as well as skill and ingenuity, as in the cauldron hanger from Dorn Farm, Gloucestershire, a *tour de force* of Roman blacksmithing.





**27 Spade-iron**  
Combend, Gloucestershire

Romano-British spades differ from those of today as they were entirely

**28 Field anvil**  
Probably 4th century AD  
Sandy Hoard, Bedfordshire

A portable anvil for use in the field. The pointed end was driven into the

**29 Two pruning hooks**  
Walbrook, London

These agricultural and garden implements probably had many uses. The original boxwood handle of the smaller example survives.

**30 Sickle**  
Southwark, London

The normal Roman form with tanged handle and slender balanced blade. This type of implement could be used with a sweeping action to slice through the crop. A smaller, stouter range of reaping hooks required the

**31 Rake head**  
Borough Hill, near Daventry,  
Northamptonshire

Part of the oak beam and three iron prongs from what was probably a six- or seven-prong hay rake. Rakes became an essential part of farm equipment when the Roman introduction of the scythe greatly





32



33

**27 Spade-iron**

Combend, Gloucestershire

Romano-British spades differ from those of today as they were entirely or mainly of wood with just the sides and end of the blade made of iron.

PRB 1810.2.10.6

**28 Field anvil**

Probably 4th century AD  
Sandy Hoard, Bedfordshire

A portable anvil for use in the field. The pointed end was driven into the ground as far as the two scrolled projections. These steadied the small anvil face on which the reaper could sharpen or repair his sickles and scythes.

Given by F Ransom, Esq.  
PRB 1915.12.8.330

**29 Two pruning hooks**

Walbrook, London

These agricultural and garden implements probably had many uses. The original boxwood handle of the smaller example survives.

Given by the Christy Trustees  
PRB 1934.12.10.44-45

**30 Sickle**

Southwark, London

The normal Roman form with tang handle and slender balanced blade. This type of implement could be used with a sweeping action to slice through the crop. A smaller, stouter range of reaping hooks required the stalks to be held taut in one hand while the tool was pulled through the stems.

PRB 1866.7.1.1109



40 Flesh-fork  
Probably 1st/2nd c  
Tokenhouse Yard  
This type of long-  
used for serving t  
Often it was a dot  
implement combi

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### Locks and keys

Various types of lock were in use in Roman Britain. The simplest was operated by a latch-lifter, really no more than a removable handle. For doors the lift key was probably most widely used, while slide keys and rotary keys for more complex locks were particularly favoured for chests, strongboxes and cupboards. One of the many uses of padlocks was to secure manacles or fetters.

### 41 Replica of tumbler lock and slide key

This type of lock had a number of tumblers, often arranged in simple patterns which engaged in holes in the bolt and were held in place there with a leaf spring. The bit of the key has a series of teeth on its upper side which correspond to the tumblers in their size, shape and arrangement, and the bolt was freed by pushing the key up into it to raise the tumblers, and thus allow the key to slide the bolt to one side.

Here, the replica  
its teeth just abo  
the tumblers.

PRB CRM 432

### 42 Slide key, lift key London

PRB 1856.7.1.1078; 1892.11-4.2  
1856.7.1.819.

### 43 Rotary key Colchester, Essex

PRB 1870. 4-2

shown with  
page with

key

Sir A. W. Frankel

### 44 Latch-lifter Borough Hill, near Dun Northamptonshire Given by R. Beckett, Esq PRB 1863.3.42B



**Window grille**  
Hinton St Mary, Dorset

Such grilles were commonly used in the Roman world to provide security for glazed or unglazed windows. They seldom survive intact, however, and this example, from a villa of the late 3rd or 4th century AD, is the most complete one of its type known. The contemporary interior scene is from a reconstruction at the Museum of London.

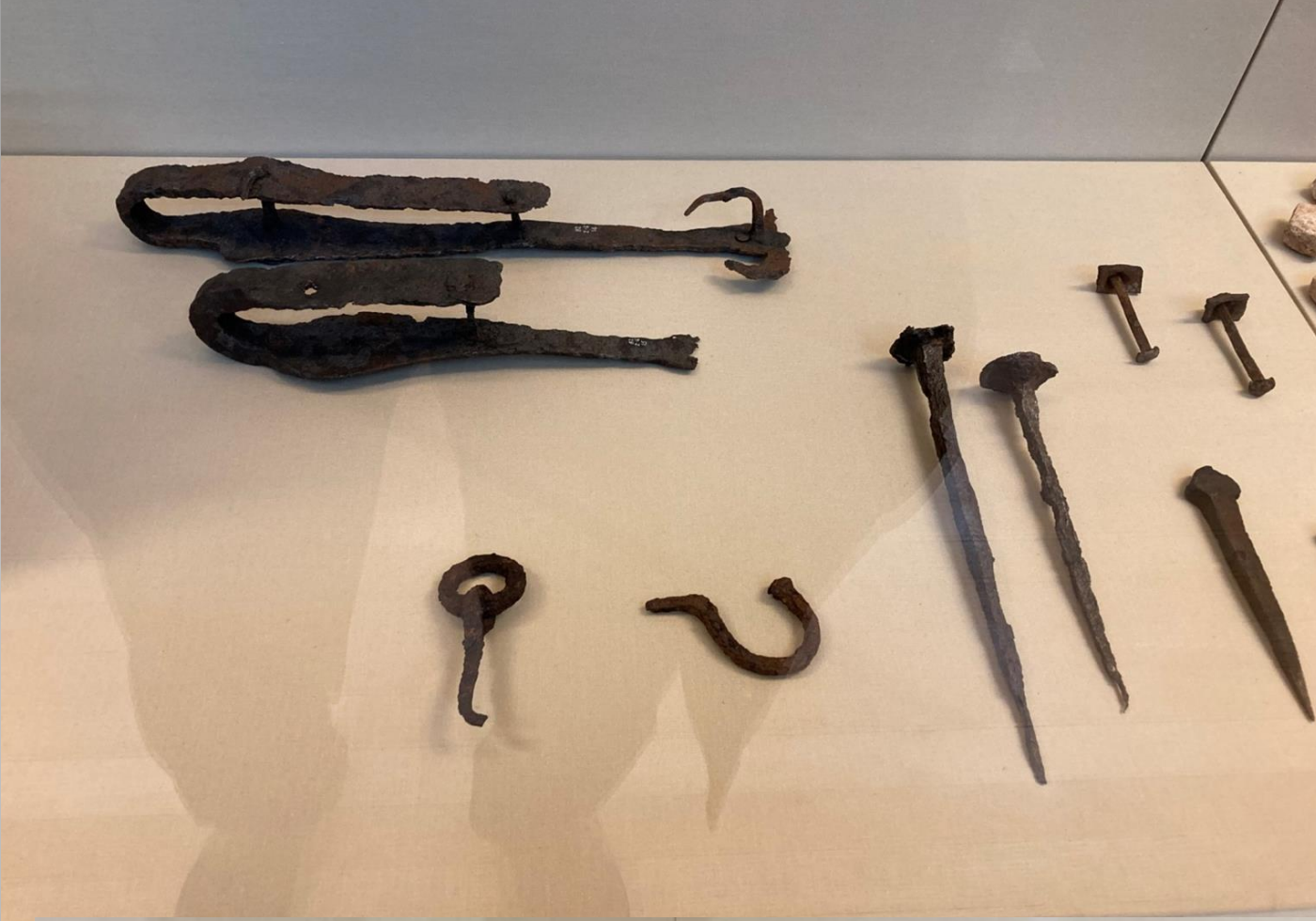
# BUILDINGS

The introduction of new building materials, methods and designs were amongst the most obvious changes brought about by the Roman occupation. Stone was extensively used for building, and fired brick and concrete were seen for the first time in Britain. Buildings incorporating columns, arches, vaults and domes were constructed, and buildings with more than one storey undoubtedly existed. The sheer size of some Roman buildings would have been a revelation to the native population in the early decades of Roman rule.

The Roman way of life required certain specially-designed structures, from forts and basilicas to bathhouses, theatres and amphitheatres. Public and private baths depended on sophisticated heating systems and reliable piped water supplies, luxuries which were extended to other domestic buildings.

Decorative interior finishes such as mosaic floors, marble inlay and painted wall-plaster were an integral part of the architecture, and an important device for spreading familiarity with Roman art and iconography. Though most inhabitants of the province must have continued to live in modest traditional dwellings themselves, their perceptions of architecture and engineering would have been profoundly altered by the buildings they saw around them.





**Iron hinges**  
Lakenheath, Suffolk

Two drop-hinges, probably from doors, both with a decorative terminal on the outer strap. In use the looped end pivoted on the short upturned arm of an L-shaped staple which was driven into the adjacent wall or door frame.

PRB 1882.2-6.14, 15

**Iron ring handle**  
Hod Hill, Dorset

The ring held in a split staple was a common Roman method of providing a fixture with a free-running ring, for use as a door-handle, a tethering ring, or a variety of other functions.

PRB 1893.6-1.55



**Iron nails and holdfasts**

Gloucestershire; Rushall Down,  
Witshire; Brough Hill, Daventry,  
Northamptonshire; Southwark,  
London

Immense quantities of nails were used  
in Roman Britain. All were hand-  
forged with a square shank. Most had  
a flat or lightly domed head.

Holdfasts, which functioned effectively  
as rivets, were used to fasten together  
two pieces of wood where ordinary  
nails were insufficient. The four  
examples here have diamond-shaped  
tail-plates or roves.

PRB 1902.6-16.63; 1853.5-14.10; 1892.12-9.1-4



**Bronze tap**  
Philpot Lane, London

This decorative bronze tap or stopcock in the form of a wolf's head now lacks its perforated stopper. It may have come from a public fountain or *nymphaeum* served by an aqueduct.

PRB 1856.7-1.1073

**Stone tesserae**  
Uley, Gloucestershire

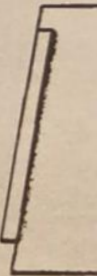
Floors were finished in many different ways, from basic beaten earth to timber, several different types of concrete and mortar, some of them colourful and decorative, to brick and stone. A *tessera*, or *tessella*, is a cube of stone or brick: the larger sizes, like these stone examples, were used alone to make plain floors or



## Roofs

Red terracotta tiled roofs were seen for the first time in Britain under Roman rule. Traditional techniques such as thatching would also have continued in use, but the frequent use of fired clay in building made great practical and visual differences to the architectural landscape. The two types of ceramic tile shown here were used together, without any nails, to form a ribbed roof of shallow pitch, not more than about 20°.

This type of roofing is still to be seen in parts of France and Italy. Roof-slates made of local stone were also employed to make steeper roofs requiring nails to anchor the slates. The pointed shape of sandstone or slate roofing tiles created a decorative fish-scale pattern. Ceramic or stone roof-crests, finials and antefixes (ornamental triangular tiles set on the long edges of the roof) also added to the decorative effect.



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**Roof-tiles: tegula and imbrex**  
London, Pudding Pan Rock  
(Herne Bay), Kent  
These show the two standard tile  
forms which interlocked to form  
a roof.

**Stone roof-tile**  
Uley, Gloucestershire  
The stone roofing slate still retains  
its iron nail.

**Box-floer tile**  
2nd century AD  
Plaxtol, Kent  
At the back of the case is a  
fragment of box-floer tile found  
during excavations of a Roman  
villa. A roller stamp was used to  
impress the inscription  
**FABRIAEVM CABRIANVM**. This translates as 'I  
Cabrianus, made (this) wall  
tile'. The inscription tells us that  
Cabrianus used his products to  
advertise his tile-making skills.



**Heating**  
Effective central heating was  
essential for Roman bath buildings  
and the hypocaust (see below) is one  
system which was also employed in some  
domestic buildings. Heat from a  
furnace was conducted into a space  
below a floor and up through flues or  
ducts in the walls to create an even  
high temperature. Flues were sealed  
on pillars of unglazed brick or terracotta.  
The construction of the walls was using  
tiles incorporating projections, not  
solid clay pavers, or perforated  
flue tiles.





### Heating

Effective central heating was essential for Roman bath buildings, and the *hypocaust* ('fire beneath') system was also employed in some domestic buildings. Heat from a furnace was conducted into a space below a floor and up through flues or ducts in the walls to create an even high temperature. Floors were raised on pillars of mortared brick or stone. The cavities in the walls were constructed in different ways, using tiles incorporating projections, iron and clay spacers, or prefabricated flue-tiles.

### Wall-spacer

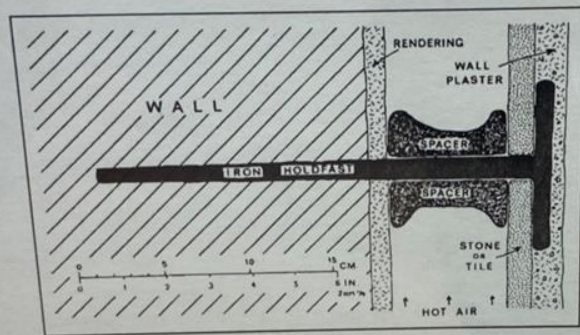
Garden Hill, Hartfield, Sussex

This object, from the bath-house of a Roman villa, formed part of a system which separated the two skins of the wall by means of iron rods clad with fired-clay reel-shaped spacers.

PRB P1974.5-1.2

artfield, Sussex

om the bath-house of a  
formed part of a system  
ated the two skins of the  
ns of iron rods clad with  
el-shaped spacers.



Reconstruction of use of baked clay 'spacer' and iron hold-fast. After J.H. Money

### Box-flue tiles

Ashtead, Surrey; Unprovenanced

Flue-tiles would have been completely covered and concealed once in place, but even so, the roughening of the surface which provided keying for mortar was often carried out in very decorative ways. Manufacturers' name-stamps are found, and roller-stamps were used on the soft, unfired tile to make patterns ranging from geometric designs to hunting-scenes.

Bequeathed by A.W.G. Lowther Esq.  
PRB P:1973.4-3.72  
PRB P:1973.4-3.144



### Water supply

Wells were a common water source in Roman Britain. However, aqueducts were sometimes provided for forts, towns or bath buildings where a large and constant flow of water was required. They were usually simple underground channels which tapped springs, streams or rivers. For distribution at the point of delivery there were pipelines of lead, earthenware or wood.

The use of lead piping may sometimes have resulted in poisoning, for the toxic effects lead were not properly understood in antiquity, but in many areas hard water would have caused a protective coating of lime-scale to form inside the pipe. Wooden piping was made by auguring out the centre of roughly-squared lengths of tree-trunk. These were then recessed in trenches and joined together with iron junction collars. When found, the wooden parts have usually rotted away leaving the lines of corroded iron collars.



### Wall decoration

Interior walls finished with plaster were widespread in Roman Britain; coloured and painted plaster was not confined to public buildings or the dwellings of the very wealthy. Designs were derived from the standard repertoire of Roman art and included conventional architectural ornament and picture panels depicting mythological or naturalistic scenes. Though the fragments surviving from Britain are usually small, they confirm that wall-painting here was similar to that elsewhere in the Empire.

As with mosaic floors, the concept of painted walls was a Roman introduction, and the subjects chosen were Roman. Walls finished in veneers of thin layers of exotic coloured stone and marble were much more expensive luxuries, and were sometimes simulated in painting. Beautiful coloured stones and marbles were very highly prized in the Roman world for both structural and decorative stonework, and no effort or expense was spared in quarrying them and transporting them throughout the Empire.



**Wall-plaster with graffito**  
Hucclecote, Gloucestershire

This is a fragment of plain wall-plaster with a design scratched on it showing part of the gable end of a building. Though it is very schematic, there are visible similarities with the façade from Meonstoke. The fairly steep pitch of the roof implies that the building illustrated had a slate or stone roof rather than tiles.

Given by Mrs Elsie Clifford  
PRB 1939.6.2.2

**Fragments of painted wall-plaster**  
London

These fragments of fresco decoration in bold colours are typical. They depict part of a goat or capricorn, a human bust emerging from a leafy calyx, and a naturalistic bird.

PRB 1856.7-1.746, 747, 755



### The Roach Smith Collection

Many objects displayed in this gallery have Museum numbers beginning 1856.7-1. They are from the large collection of antiquities, mainly from London, formed by Charles Roach Smith (1807-1890). The early 19th century was a period of intense development in London, and Roach Smith tirelessly observed and recorded it. Without him, much of the early history of London would have been lost for ever. His collection was bought by the Museum Trustees in 1856, and continues to be a major resource for research.



Portrait of Charles Roach Smith on a medal presented to him in 1890 in recognition of his services to archaeology. CM 1890,8-10,1 (Given by J. Evans, Esq.)

### Decorative stone inlay London; Woodchester, Gloucestershire

These fragments exemplify some of the coloured stones imported for use as expensive architectural decoration. The Imperial porphyry, obtained only from mountain-top quarries in a remote area of the Eastern Desert of Egypt, was not found in Britain, but the painted depiction of porphyry on the plaster fragment implies that the painter, working in London, was familiar with its appearance.

PRB 1856.7-1.; PRB Lysons 1811



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Many objects displayed in this gallery have Museum numbers beginning 1856.7-1. They are from the large collection of antiquities, mainly from London, formed by Charles Roach Smith (1807-1890). The early 19th century was a period of intense development in London, and Roach



### Decorative stone inlay London; Woodchester, Gloucestershire

These fragments exemplify some of the coloured stones imported for use as expensive architectural decoration. The Imperial porphyry, obtained only from mountain-top quarries in a remote area of the Eastern Desert of Egypt, was not found in Britain, but

**The Hemsworth Venus mosaic**  
4th century AD  
Hemsworth, Dorset

The existence of a Roman villa with numerous mosaics was first noted at Hemsworth in 1831, but agricultural work continued on the site, and by the time the area was again uncovered in 1908, much had been lost. The panel shown here is the flooring of an apse at one end of a large and imposing reception room. The scene is of Venus rising from the sea, standing on a stylized shell and surrounded in the outer border by fanciful dolphins and other marine creatures.

When placed on display before the First World War, the panel was heavily restored using modern brick, stone and mortar, and the curve of the outer edge was slightly distorted through inaccuracies in the mounting of the radial sections in which the pavement was lifted; a more accurate view of the design is conveyed by the present mounting of the sections.

Given by Lord Alington  
PRB 1908.12-15.1



# THE HOXNE HOARD

The late-Roman treasure from Hoxne, Suffolk, was discovered in November 1992 by Mr Eric Lawes, who reported the find immediately without taking all the objects from the ground. This responsible conduct enabled the Suffolk Archaeological Unit to carry out a controlled excavation of the deposit. Small context groups were lifted intact and packed for transfer to the British Museum, where the excavation and detailed recording was completed.

The hoard consists of over 15,000 gold and silver coins, gold jewellery, numerous small items of silver tableware, in particular spoons, and traces of boxes or caskets within a larger wooden chest. Though no vestige of the wood from the outer container was preserved, fragments of iron bands and precise observation of the extent of the deposit made it possible to infer its size, approximately 60 x 45 x 30 cm.

The Hoxne treasure is significant in itself, as it is a large assemblage of valuables concealed after AD 407/8, the period when Roman rule was breaking down in Britain, but its importance for research in the future has been greatly enhanced by the fact that it was properly excavated and recorded.



#### A reconstruction of the Hoxne treasure chest

The Hoxne treasure was buried in a wooden chest. When the hoard was excavated, archaeologists found that the items were all together in one small area. This showed the treasure had been buried as a group on a single occasion.

Some fragments of this wooden outer chest survive. Further pieces of wood and bone inlay, as well as silver padlocks, showed that smaller caskets had been placed

inside this chest. Tiny traces of textile show that some items had been placed inside bags. Straw had also been used to protect objects.

The large outer chest was a simple wooden box with a flat lid held together with iron straps and rivets. Inside the box were at least two small caskets.

A small selection of some of the objects in the Hoxne treasure chest is displayed here. They are shown in their approximate original positions.



#### Top of box

- two necklace chains and two finger rings, which had been hooked onto the chains
- gold bracelets, found stacked together
- silver spoons with short bird handles
- silver toothpicks with comma shaped blades

#### Bottom of box

- set of silver bowls and a shallow dish, originally stacked and separated with straw for protection
- gold armlet
- silver spoons, also stacked
- over 700 silver *siliquae* coins, a small proportion of the total of 15,234 coins

#### Large inner casket

- pepperpot in the shape of Hercules wrestling the giant Antaeus
- silver juglet and beaker
- silver gilt ladles, and silver ladles with monogram crosses

#### Small inner casket

- 442 gold and silver coins



## Roman Britain

# THE THETFORD TREASURE

This remarkable hoard of late-Roman gold jewellery and silver tableware was found near Thetford, Norfolk, in 1979.

The jewellery, most of which is in pristine, unused condition, epitomises the late-Antique taste for elaboration and bright colour which had been evolving since the third century, and the stylistic links between the individual items suggest that most were the products of a single workshop, quite possibly in Britain.

The silver spoons, comparable with those in the Hoxne treasure, are characteristic of the later fourth century, comprising the larger *cigni* with short bird-head handles and *cochlearia* with long pointed handles. The inscriptions which they carry refer not to Christianity, but to the obscure Italian god Faunus. The presence of added Celtic epithets emphasises that this was a local cult. There are Bacchic elements in the decoration of both spoons and jewellery, and Faunus may at this date have formed part of the wider Bacchic cult. The overtly pagan nature of the hoard is exceptional at this late date, and its concealment may have been the result of anti-pagan legislation in the final decade of the fourth century AD.



Site of Thetford

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**Silver spoons**  
Thetford, Norfolk

The thirty-three spoons ranked as an exceptionally large group until eclipsed by the Hoxne treasure. The majority are engraved with dedications to Faunus, his name combined with Celtic epithets. A few have personal names and generic good-luck phrases, such as VTI FELIX ('use this happily', on the spoon displayed bottom right).

One group displayed here (centre bottom) all have personal names combined with VIVAS. VIVAS,

meaning 'may you live', was a good luck formula, frequently used in late Roman times, often by Christians. One spoon reads SILVIOLA VIVAS+. The cross is intriguing, because it is a Christian symbol. It is the only clear indication of the Christian religion in the Thetford hoard, most of which is undoubtedly pagan.

P&E 1981 2-1 2-23

● **Gold rings**  
Thetford, Norfolk

The twenty-two finger rings in the Thetford treasure form a unique group. Some of the rings are of familiar late-Roman type, but others are of exceptionally original and flamboyant design. Traits in common between the rings and some of the other pieces of jewellery imply that most, if not all, the gold objects were the products of one workshop.

The rings are set with garnets, emeralds, amethysts, various

forms of semi-precious hardstone and glass. Many small settings were evidently loose and were not recovered when the hoard was found. The engraved gems are of earlier date than the goldwork, and had been re-mounted from older pieces of jewellery.

The most noteworthy rings are those with shoulders in the form of dolphins and birds.

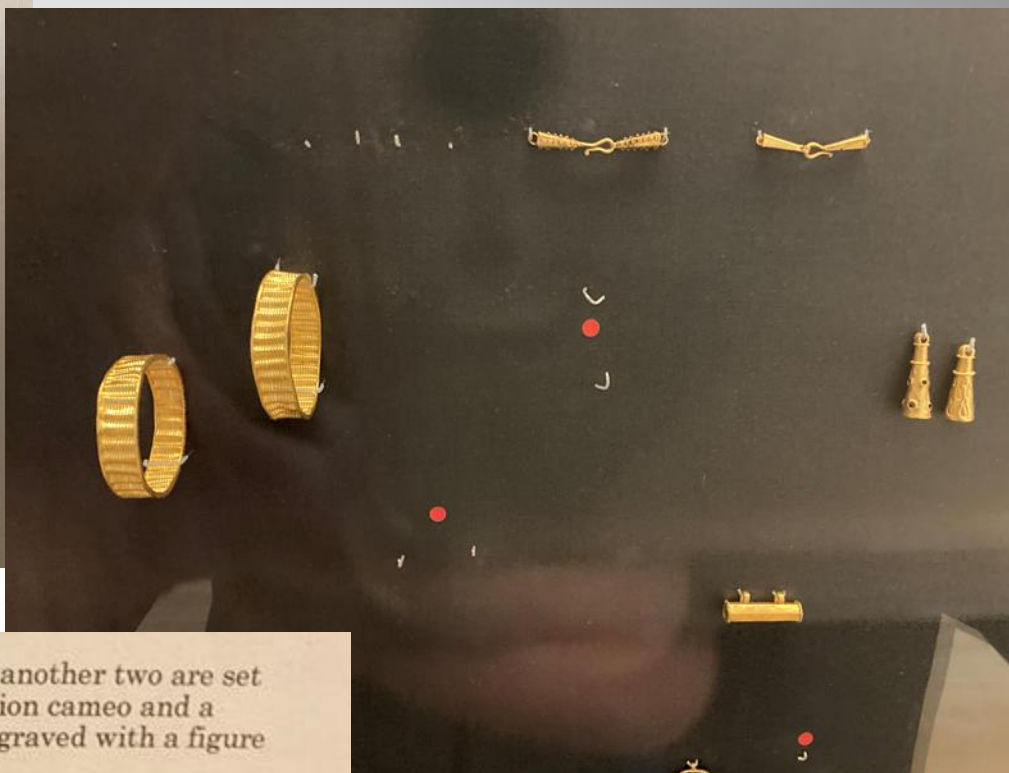
P&E 1981 2-1 2-23

● **Gold jewellery**  
Thetford, Norfolk

The jewellery other than the rings consists of necklaces, five pendants, four gold buckles, and a gold bracelet. One necklace consists of five beads of green glass and another, probably, is a series of interlocking beads.

The pendants include a case of hexagonal shape which contained only sulphur. The pendants are similar in shape, a design often

Object removed



**Gold jewellery**  
Thetford, Norfolk

The jewellery other than the rings consists of necklaces and clasps, five pendants, four bracelets and a gold buckle. One necklace has beads of green glass and emerald and another, probably incomplete, is a series of interlocking gold beads.

The pendants include an amulet-case of hexagonal section which contained only sulphur. Two pendants are similar Hercules-club shapes, a design often used for

earrings, and another two are set with gems, a lion cameo and a chalcedony engraved with a figure of Diana.

The four bracelets include a matching pair similar to a set of four in the Hoxne hoard (see the other side of this case). The gold buckle with a figure of a satyr (bottom left) is the most unusual item in the group.

P&E 1981 2-1 24-46

removed for study



**Engraved gem**  
Thetford, Norfolk

Like the other engraved gems, this fine large carnelian must have been removed from an older piece of jewellery. It was originally an elongated oval shape, and has been trimmed down to a rectangular form for re-setting. It depicts Venus with Cupid and the armour of Mars.

P&E 1981 2-1 41

**Green beads**  
Thetford, Norfolk

One of the four beads is an emerald, while the other three are green-and-yellow glass rather loosely imitating emeralds. The bead necklace in the hoard has the same combination of glass and gem beads: it has lost only one bead, and it is possible that the necklace of gold beads may also have incorporated beads of other materials.

P&E 1981 2-1 42-45/6



**Shale box**  
Thetford, Norfolk

This lidded box, which was said to have contained some of the jewellery when the treasure was found, is made of turned Kimmeridge shale. Other objects made from shale can be seen in case 3.



**Decorated limestone sarcophagus**

4th century AD

Haydon Square, London

The strigilated ornament and the baskets of fruit on the short sides are competently done, but the small medallion portrait is quite crudely depicted. Inside was found a lead coffin with the skeleton of a boy of ten to twelve years covered with lime, and it is possible that the portrait was intended to show a boy of that age. The sarcophagus has a plain back and was evidently intended to be set against a wall, probably in a mausoleum or walled cemetery.

Given by Rev Thomas Hile  
PRB 1853.6-20.1-2



#### Silver statuette of a tigress (1)

The tigress is a solid casting with stripes inlaid in niello. The figure was probably intended as one of a pair of handles for a large silver amphora or vase, no other part of which was present in the hoard. Tigers and other large cats were associated with Bacchus, and the amphora to which the Hoxne tigress belonged would probably have had Bacchic decoration.

P&E P.1994 4-8 30

#### Silver-gilt spoons

A pair of silver-gilt strainer-spoons with handles in the form of dolphins. Each depicts a bearded man in the bowl, probably the sea-god Oceanus (also shown on the Mildenhall Great Dish, case 22). They probably served solid foodstuffs floating in a liquid, maybe cheese in brine or fruit floating in water. The other spoon shows a marine beast, half-cat, half-fish. It seems to belong with the other two.

P&E P. 1994 4-8 62-64



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P&E P. 1994 4-8 62-64

### Silver-gilt spoons with animals

Four long-handled silver spoons with gilded decoration in the bowl. A number of different animals are depicted. Two show dolphins and another a marine griffin, part fish, lion and eagle. Marine scenes are a common design feature of a number of pieces in the Hoxne hoard. The last depicts a bird with a long neck and long, thick tail, which can probably be identified as a peacock.

P&E P. 1994 4-8 71-2, 79-80

### Gold body-chain (†)

This distinctive type of ornament had a long history and is represented in both Hellenistic and Roman art, but actual examples are extremely rare. The chains passed over the shoulders and under the arms of the wearer, with a decorative focus where they join on the chest and on the back. The two plaques where the chains join comprise a gold coin of Gratian (AD 367-83) in a decorative mount, and an oval setting for nine gems.

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# THE HOXNE TREASURE

In addition to the very large series of coins, the latest of which establish that the burial of the treasure took place after AD 407/8, the Hoxne hoard contains silver tableware and gold jewellery.

The silver objects are all of quite small size: nearly 100 spoons and ladles form the bulk of the inventory. Owners of such an extensive collection of silverware would almost certainly have possessed large table vessels such as those in the Mildenhall treasure.

These may have been separately concealed elsewhere in another container or wrappings, and might have been dug up, unrecorded, at any time during the last 1600 years. The silver tigress indicates the existence of at least one large table-vessel, as it is the deliberately detached handle of a tall silver vase.

The small silver hinges, padlocks and other box-fittings indicate the presence of smaller caskets within the wooden chest.

The unusual selection of jewellery comprises a very rare body-chain, a small group of necklaces without any pendants, three finger-rings, but no fewer than 19 bracelets, including matching pairs and sets of four. There are no brooches or earrings. It may be that the jewellery represents pieces in a family's collection which were not in regular use.



#### Bracelets (above ☞)

A selection of the nineteen bracelets in the Hoxne treasure is displayed (others are shown in the reconstructed chest, right). They were made using different manufacturing techniques. Some are openwork, with a design pierced through the soft gold. Others are repoussé, with the design hammered out from the back. Some were decorated using granulation, tiny beads of gold applied to the surface; or filigree, delicate pieces of gold wire.

Designs include geometric patterns such as circles, stars and lozenges; hunting scenes, with pairs of animals; and vine-scrolls with bunches of grapes.

One bracelet (bottom right) incorporates the phrase *UTERE FELIX DOMINA IULIANE*. The lettering, spacing and spelling are idiosyncratic, but the sense is clear, wishing good fortune to 'Lady Juliana', the owner of the piece.

P&E P.1994 4-8 13, 18, 22-5, 27-9

#### Silver ladles

Small ladles with deep, round bowls occur in several late-Roman hoards, e.g. the Mildenhall treasure (case 22). Hoxne has twenty ladles forming two sets of ten (some are also shown in the reconstructed chest, far right). One type has engraved decoration incorporating the monogram cross. The other has a gilded handle and bowl and distinctive 'chip carved' ornament, which foreshadows a later technique.

P&E P. 1994 4-8 44, 59

#### Silver strainers

Very small round-bowled silver strainers are a familiar late-Roman type, but their precise use at table is not known. One of these is displayed here; other examples from the Thetford treasure are displayed on the other side of the case.

Another much larger utensil is a combined strainer-funnel. This is very unusual. It presumably had a specialised use, perhaps connected with straining impurities from wine. Wine could have been served

hot or cold, and may contained herbs and flavour it, which need strained out before drinking.

The example with the cross and straining holes in the bowl is also very unusual. It is a strainer-spoon, similar to gilded examples with a ring handle. The example with the Oceanus also displayed

P&E P.1994 4-8 113, 141-2

Only the central amethyst and four garnets survive.

The Hoxne body-chain is very small. It could only have been worn by an unusually slender, probably young, woman or teenage girl. It may have been made for a special occasion, and worn only once. It is possible that this special occasion was the wedding of a young bride.

P&E P.1994 4-8 1

#### Spoons with engraved decoration

Some spoons in the Hoxne hoard have engraved decoration on the inside of the bowls. These include both real and imaginary creatures.

The spoon with the round bowl is one of the earliest in the hoard. It shows an ibex, with long, backward-curving horns. Another spoon shows a peacock pecking at a vine, probably symbolic of Christian belief. Another also shows a bird, this time holding a worm.

Another spoon has an engraving of a marine lion with open jaws, curly lines for the mane, and a fish body with fins.

The last spoon has a geometric leaf pattern in its bowl. This design is similar to some spoons in the Mildenhall treasure (see case 22).

P&E P.1994 4-8 112, 126, 134, 137-8

#### Spoons with Christian symbols and inscriptions

References to Christianity, found alongside objects with designs from Classical mythology, are common features of late Roman treasures. Hoxne is no exception, and a number of spoons bear Christian symbols and inscriptions.

Two spoons have a personal name on the handle, Aurelius Ursicinus, the commonest name in the whole hoard. In the bowl of these spoons is a Christian chi-rho symbol, combined with an alpha and

omega. This suggests Ursicinus was a Christian. Other spoons have a name in their bowl but no Christian name.

Another spoon is inscribed 'SILVICOLA VIVAS' (may you live), a phrase often used by Christians. Some spoons in the Mildenhall treasure have a similar inscription on the other side of the bowl.

P&E P.1994 4-8 09-21, 100, 136

# HOXNE THE COINS

Of the total number of coins found in the hoard (approximately 15,000), 574 are gold coins of the denomination known as the *solidus*, with eight different Roman Emperors represented from Valentinian I (AD 364-75) to Honorius (AD 393-423). There are also 61 large silver *miliarenses* and over 14,000 small silver *siliquae* spanning fourteen reigns from Constantius II (AD 337-61) to Constantine III (AD 407-11). The coins originated from 16 different imperial mints ranging from Trier in the west to Antioch in the east.

The most striking feature of the coin element of the hoard is its sheer size. Hoards of Roman coins of this period are relatively common from Britain, but they are all much smaller, generally containing no more than a few hundred coins.

Crucial to the dating of the hoard's burial are the latest coins, two *siliquae* of the usurper Constantine III (AD 407-11), a governor who removed large detachments of troops from Britain in order to defeat the Emperor Honorius. These show that the hoard must have been buried after AD 407 during the time of political upheaval when the Roman Empire effectively abandoned control of Britain.





North Sea

Atlantic Ocean

Hoxne

Trier

Lyon

Arles

Milan

Aquileia

Sirmium

Siscia

Ravenna

Constantinople

Rome

Thessalonica

Black Sea

Nicomedia

Cyzicus

Antioch

Mediterranean Sea



**Denominations of gold, silver and bronze coins from the Hoxne treasure**

Roman  
4th–5th century AD

In order of value:

- 1 Gold solidus
- 2 Silver miliarensis
- 3 Silver siliqua (=½ miliarensis)
- 4 Silver ½ siliqua
- 5 Bronze nummus

**Clipped silver coin (6) & copy (7) from the Hoxne treasure**

Roman  
late 4th–early 5th century AD

Many silver coins in Hoxne are clipped (7). The clippings may have been used for forgeries (8). This apparent abuse may have been widespread fraud in lawless times or to increase available coinage after the imperial mints stopped supplying Britain about AD 402.

Siliqua forgery (7), an example of incompetent style and illiterate legend



**Roman emperors in the Hoxne treasure on gold and silver coins**

Roman  
4th–5th century AD

Fifteen emperors are represented on coins. Although most are shaven and some have different hairstyles, their features are remarkably similar. They are all crowned with a jewelled diadem. Most have the shoulders of their breastplates visible, while Honorius (4) is fully armed and armoured.



**A reconstruction of the Hoxne treasure chest**

The Hoxne treasure was buried in a wooden chest. When the hoard was excavated, archaeologists found that the items were all together in one small area. This showed the treasure had been buried as a group on a single occasion.

Some fragments of this wooden outer chest survive. Further pieces of wood and bone inlay, as well as silver padlocks, showed that smaller caskets had been placed

inside this chest. Tiny traces of textile show that some items had been placed inside bags. Straw had also been used to protect objects.

The large outer chest was a simple wooden box with a flat lid held together with iron straps and rivets. Inside the box were at least two small caskets.

A small selection of some of the objects in the Hoxne treasure chest is displayed here. They are shown in their approximate original positions.





#### Top of box

- two necklace chains and two finger rings, which had been hooked onto the chains
- gold bracelets, found stacked together
- silver spoons with short bird handles
- silver toothpicks with comma shaped blades

#### Bottom of box

- set of silver bowls and a shallow dish, originally stacked and separated with straw for protection
- gold armlet
- silver spoons, also stacked
- over 700 silver *siliquae* coins, a small proportion of the total of 15,234 coins

#### Large inner casket

- pepperpot in the shape of Hercules wrestling the giant Antaeus
- silver juglet and beaker
- silver gilt ladles, and silver ladles with monogram crosses

#### Small inner casket

- 442 gold and silver coins

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P&E 1994 4-8; CM 1994 4-1

## THE MILDENHALL TREASURE

This hoard is one of the most important collections of late-Roman silver tableware from the Roman Empire. Little is known of the precise circumstances of its discovery; the objects were unearthed during ploughing near Mildenhall, Suffolk, in 1942 or 1943, and were reported and declared Treasure Trove in 1946.

The technical and artistic quality of the silver vessels is outstanding, and though we cannot know who owned them, it is reasonable to assume that it was a person or family of considerable wealth and high social status. Owners of tableware of this quality and value would also undoubtedly have possessed many more pieces than were concealed together in this hoard. In particular, they probably owned other large vessels such as flagons, additional sets of small bowls, and far greater numbers of spoons and ladles. As yet little is known about manufacturing centres for silver plate.

No coins or jewellery were associated with the find. A date in the fourth century is clearly indicated by the forms of the spoons and other utensils and the style and technique of the decoration, all of which are typical of that period.





**Set of glass vessels**  
Burgh Castle, Norfolk  
Early 5th century AD

This unique set of glass vessels was discovered in 1962 at Burgh Castle, Norfolk. Burgh Castle is one of the best preserved 'Saxon shore' forts, a series of defences along the coastline of Norfolk and Kent. The 'Saxon shore' forts were built from the third century AD onwards, to defend the Roman province of Britannia against raids from across the sea.

These glass vessels were found in a pit dug into a floor. They were contained

within a bronze bowl, and were probably buried for safe-keeping. Remarkably, a few of the objects were still intact when discovered. The others had to be carefully reconstructed from fragments.

All of the glass vessels are for serving and drinking liquid, probably wine. They include small jugs and beakers, some of which have a base, others which do not. The style of the glass can be related to similar items in the early Medieval Europe gallery (Room 41).

P&E 2003 03 03 1-11

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### Burgh Castle glass

Glass was preferred to metal in the late Roman period for drinking vessels, probably because metal affected the taste. In this manuscript illumination, the diner on the right is raising a glass beaker to his lips. A servant offers another beaker to a different diner. There is a silver dish on the table, which is similar to ones in the Mildenhall treasure (right).

*The Vergilius Romanus*, 4<sup>th</sup> century AD. Copyright Vatican Museums, Vatican City.



**Large dish with niello decoration  
4th century AD**

With a diameter of 55.6 cm and a weight of 5,023 g, this platter is not very much smaller than the Great Dish, but its decoration belongs to a more restrained tradition, carried out simply in engraved lines filled with niello.



**Flanged bowl and cover**  
3rd-4th century AD

The bowl with its dropped horizontal rim and niello decoration is the earliest vessel in the Mildenhall treasure, made in Gaul in the 3rd century AD. It was not designed to have a lid. The deep domed cover with a border of Bacchic ornament in relief was made in the 4th century, either for another bowl, or perhaps specifically to fit the flanged bowl. The small statuette of a triton which forms a knob may not have been part of the original design.



**Fluted bowl**  
4th century AD

Large bowls of this type were evidently intended to hold water for hand-washing while dining. The chased decoration of stylized lead patterns on the flat panels of this example closely resembles that on three of the spoons in the treasure. The centre of the bowl has geometric decoration. The meaning of the interwoven six-pointed star is unknown at this date; its adoption as a Jewish symbol took pace only in the post-medieval period.





### Spoons 4th century AD

Eight spoons were found in the Mildenhall treasure; six are displayed here. They represent examples from at least three, perhaps four, sets. It can be assumed that the owners who possessed such outstanding pieces of silver plate as the Great Dish (far right) would have had large numbers of spoons, but most of these, seemingly, were not hidden in this particular cache.

Three spoons have foliate decoration which matches that on the large fluted bowl. Another three bear the only overt Christian symbols in the hoard, the chi-rho monogram flanked by the Greek letters alpha and omega. The remaining two spoons have personal names, Papittedo and Pascentia (displayed here), with the word *vivas* (may you live) a good luck formula frequently used in late Roman times, often by Christians.

P&E P.1946.10-7.27, 29-30, 32-34



**Flanged bowls**  
4th century AD

Bowls of this shape were popular in late-Roman table services. The decoration on the flat rims shows a variety of animals in hunting and pastoral scenes, themes which fall into the general category of Bacchic imagery. The heads which decorate the centre panels of three of the bowls have not been identified with certainty.

We have no details of the way in which the Mildenhall treasure was arranged in the ground, but the nature of the plough-damage on these four vessels is typical of the distortion and breakage which occurs when bowls of similar shape are packed nested into one another and then subjected to pressure or impact. The tearing is most severe on the bowl with the portrait of a young woman in the centre, so this would have been the outermost piece.



**Platters with Bacchic decoration  
4th century AD**

The pair of small dishes or platters with Bacchic scenes are closely related in style and subject to the Great Dish itself. Both show Maenads, female followers of Bacchus, dancing and playing musical instruments, in one case accompanied by the god Pan and in the other by a young satyr. The name Eutherios, written in Greek and in the genitive (possessive) case is scratched lightly on the underside of each dish within the footring.





### The Mildenhall Great Dish

The most famous object in the Mildenhall treasure is the large highly decorated circular platter usually known as the Great Dish, or as the Neptune or Oceanus Dish. Bacchic imagery had a long history in Greek and Roman art, and this example, on a magnificent silver vessel measuring 60.5 cm in diameter and weighing 8,256 g, is one of the finest to survive from the late-Roman period.

The decoration, worked in low relief and engraved line on the front surface of the silver, alludes to the worship and mythology of Bacchus on land and in the sea. The staring face in the centre represents Oceanus, his beard formed of seaweed fronds and dolphins in his hair. The inner circle, bordered by scallop shells, consists of sea-nymphs riding mythological marine creatures, a sea-horse, a triton, a sea-stag and a *ketos*, a dragon-like sea-monster.

The wide outer frieze features Bacchus himself, holding a bunch of grapes and a *thyrsus* (a staff tipped with a pine-cone) and resting a foot on his panther, presiding over a celebration of music, dancing and drinking in his honour. The participants include the hero Hercules, overcome by wine, the goat-legged god Pan, and sundry satyrs and Maenads (female devotees).

Treasure Trove  
PRB 1946,10-7.1





### Mosaic of a sea-god (above)

4th century AD  
Withington, Gloucestershire

This aquatic scene depicts the head and upper torso of a sea-god, either Oceanus or Neptune, with a straggling beard, lobster claws at each temple and a trident across one shoulder. He is surrounded by dolphins, mythical sea-creatures and marine vegetation.

The mosaic, from a large villa, was laid next to an earlier mosaic showing Orpheus surrounded by animals (see image above).

Donated by Henry Brooke  
P&E 1812,0613.1



### Painted plaster (above)

Late 2nd century AD  
St Albans, Hertfordshire

This large panel comes from the upper part of an external wall of a courtyard house excavated at the Roman town of Verulamium (St Albans) in 1956. It was probably protected by an awning.

It shows a scroll encircling two pairs of facing panther heads and long-tailed birds, possibly peahens. The scroll design, on yellow ochre, is a unique survival from Roman Britain.

On loan from the Earl of Verulam and the Gorhambury Estates



Roman Britain  
49  
↑ 20-6 Cloaks and Washes  
#0 Medieval Europe AD 500-1500  
#1 Sutton Hoo and Europe AD 500-1000  
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## **Painted walls from Lullingstone**

### **Roman villa**

4th century AD

Lullingstone

The restored areas of wall-painting shown here are from a room in the villa which was evidently used for Christian worship in the late-Roman period. One panel bears the Chi-Rho monogram, the first letters of Christ's name in Greek, which was the standard symbol of Christianity at this period. The other shows a series of figures at prayer; Christian priests still use the standing pose with raised hands when praying before a congregation.

Given by Kent County Council  
PRB 1967.4-7.1







Room  
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*The Weston Gallery*

## Roman Britain

*AD 43–about 411*



The Roman Emperor Claudius invaded Britain in AD 43. By AD 100, England and Wales and some of Scotland had been conquered. The Romans built towns, roads and villas. Latin became the official language and Roman law and money were introduced. A 'Romano-British' culture developed as new settlers from across the empire mixed with the local population. The province collapsed in the early 5th century as continental peoples from beyond the frontiers invaded.

1. Roman coin



2. Roman helmet

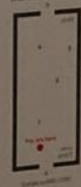


3. Roman coin



4. Roman coin

5. Roman coin



6. Roman coin