



ENGLISH HERITAGE
EDUCATION

KSI-2

HANDLING COLLECTION

Aldborough Roman Site and Town

This resource helps teachers to get the most from the handling collection at Aldborough Roman Site and Town. Aldborough became an important town in northern Britannia during the Roman occupation of Britain and shows how local people prospered under the Roman Empire.



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☎ 0370 333 0606

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Step into England's story

SELF-LED ACTIVITY

HANDLING COLLECTION



KSI-2

Recommended for

KS2 (History)

Learning objectives

- Understand what everyday life was like for people living in Roman Aldborough.
- Investigate Roman objects to learn about the role and significance of Aldborough in Roman Britain.
- Develop questioning skills and reach conclusions about how objects can help us to learn about people and technology from the past.

Time to complete

Approx. 60 minutes



Students will discover what this pottery was used for and where it came from, as well as other details about daily life in Roman Aldborough.

SUMMARY

To ensure that everything is available on the day of your visit, please book this resource with our **education bookings team**.

This activity is designed to be used in Aldborough's museum. It is intended to function as a carousel, with students rotating around four 'stations', each consisting of an object box and relevant display case. Due to space restrictions in the museum, we recommend that classes of 30 be split in half when using the handling collection, with one half exploring the site and the other using the handling collection before swapping over.

We suggest three to four students per station. Each station should take around 10 to 15 minutes, making the carousel 60 minutes in total; however, these timings can be adjusted. Should you wish your students to make notes, please bring writing materials.

Please ensure that all objects and instructions are returned to the boxes before moving on to the next activity.

THE ACTIVITIES

Rise and Shine: Students will explore items that Romans used to maintain their hygiene and appearance.

Time for Work: Students will investigate artefacts that focus on Aldborough's role as an important northern town and the jobs people did there.

Dining Roman-Style: Students will match fragments of Roman cookware to whole pieces and consider how they were used, who would have used them and why.

Roman Pastimes: Students will explore and play a Roman game and compare it to games they are familiar with.

When students are completing the carousel, encourage them to discuss what each of the objects suggests to them about life in Roman Aldborough.

RISE AND SHINE



Objects like mirrors, strigils (tools used to scrape oil and dirt off skin), nail cleaners and combs have been found at the sites of Roman towns in Britain. They tell us that personal hygiene and appearance were important to many Romans. Artefacts like brooches and jewellery were found too. They indicated a person's wealth and status, just like they do today.

GET READY

- 1 Investigate** the artefacts in this box. **What** materials are they made from and **how** were they used? Do they look like things you have at home?
- 2 Pick** an object from the box and **find** an object in the case that looks like it. What similarities and differences can you notice between the two objects?



A reconstruction image by Mikki Kriek showing how the baths at Chester's Roman Fort on Hadrian's Wall might have looked in AD 200. You can see some Romans using a strigil to scrape dirt off themselves.

- 3 Examine** the objects in the case. **Find** something that Romans used to clean their hair, and something used to clean nails.

DID YOU KNOW?



Going to the baths was not just about getting clean. It was an important meeting place to see friends. Research into Roman Aldborough continues today, and archaeologists (people who study the past by looking at remains) are looking for evidence of the houses and public buildings including bathhouses.



This is a bone hairpin carved with a decorative bird. It was used to hold long hair in place.

TIME FOR WORK



Roman Aldborough was an important northern town in Roman Britain. It was located between York and Hadrian's Wall, an important military area. Aldborough was part of a network of Roman settlements and a busy administrative centre.

WHERE WAS ALDBOROUGH?

Aldborough was a large town created by the Romans after they conquered the area. Many of the inhabitants were Brigantes, who controlled the area before the Romans came. When the Romans arrived, Cartimandua, the queen of the Brigantes worked with the Romans, although some of her people wanted to fight them. Finally, the Brigantes were conquered and their lands made part of the Roman empire. The Romans created Aldborough to govern the area. It was named *Isurium Brigantum*, after the Brigantes.



1 Look at the map of Northern Britain. Locate Hadrian's Wall, Aldborough and York.

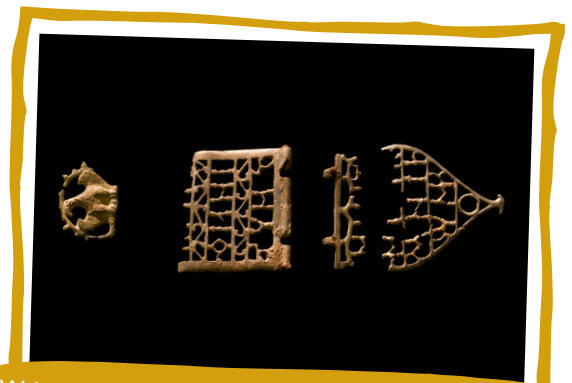
2 Accepting Roman rule meant that the Brigantes benefited from Roman money, trade, and military support. Do you think this was a good decision?

WRITING AT ALDBOROUGH

There are lots of examples of Roman writing in the museum. The letters are recognisable because the Roman alphabet is still used today.

3 Find an object with writing on it in the display case. Recreate the Roman writing using the wax tablet in the box.

Tip: if you make a mistake, you should be able to erase it by rubbing your finger against the wax and melting it.



Writing can appear in unexpected places. This is part of a baldric, a leather belt, with metal fittings, worn over the right shoulder and attached to a sword's sheath. It has some writing on it, which is part of a prayer asking the God Jupiter to protect all warriors, including 'OMNI' and 'UM' which means 'all the'.

DID YOU KNOW?



People in Roman Aldborough would have known Latin, the language of the Roman Empire. The mosaic of a Muse in the museum has Greek writing on it, which suggests that some people in Roman Aldborough also knew Greek.

TRADE AT ALDBOROUGH

Some people in Aldborough could read, write, and use numbers. This meant they could do administrative jobs.

4 Investigate the objects in the case and the handling collection box. **Find** an object used by a working Roman and **explain** how it was used by each of the following:

- Trader or shopkeeper
- Soldier
- Scribe

HINT

Use these pictures to help you think about the tools people would use in these jobs.



Illustrations showing a cavalry soldier on his horse, a woolworker with her threads and a shopkeeper with their goods to sell.

Aldborough was surrounded by a network of roads and a river. This helped people to trade goods from across the Roman Empire. They exchanged goods for money, just like we do today.

Examine the replica coins in the handling collection. The value of the coins can be determined by looking at the materials that they are made from.

- 5 Read** the flashcard on page 6 to learn about the materials original Roman coins were made of.
- 6** Some of these coins were very valuable. Do you think an average Roman working in Aldborough would have these coins in their purse? **Use** the hint box opposite to help.

HINT

Look at the list of items you could buy with the different Roman coins on the flashcard. **Use** this list to help you think about which coins an average Roman would have in their purse.

Half a litre of wine: 1 as

2 loaves of bread: 1 sestertius

Daily pay of a Roman labourer: 1 denarius

Monthly pay of a legionary soldier: 1 aureus

ROMAN COINS



An as showing the Roman Emperor Elagabalus (r.218–222). Bronze and copper coins turn green when they corrode. © Classical Numismatic Group CC0-by-SA 3.0

A coin like this is an **as**. Asses are quite small. They are made from copper alloy, which was a cheaper material. Think about copper coins we use today – how much are they worth?



A sestertius showing the Roman Emperor Hadrian (r.117–138) on one side. It has turned green because it has corroded. © Saperaud CC-by-SA3.0

A coin like this is a **sestertius**. It was worth four asses. A sestertius was made from copper alloy, like an as.



A denarius. It shows a ship on one side and an eagle design on the other. It was minted to celebrate a naval victory. © Panairjdde CC-by-SA 3.0

A silver coin like this is called a **denarius**. These were often quite small. A denarius was worth 16 asses. Two or more are called 'denarii'.



This coin shows the Roman Emperor Septimius Severus (r.193–211). © Classical Numismatic Group CC-by-SA2.0

A gold coin called an **aureus**. Gold was a more valuable metal. These coins were often quite small. An aureus was worth 25 denarii.

DINING ROMAN-STYLE



Aldborough could be reached by road, or by the River Ure, so things could come to the town from far away. Red samian ware bowls and plates, which you can find in the handling box and the case, were made in Gaul (now France). These were very expensive so only wealthy people could afford them. There is also pottery from the Nene Valley, near Peterborough in England. This was made from a different type of clay, so it is a different colour.



WHERE IN THE EMPIRE?

- 1 **Examine** the map. **Find** Aldborough, Gaul and the Nene Valley.

ROMAN CROCKERY

- 2 There are black, grey and red sherds of pottery in the box. **Find** the replica pots from the box that they match with.
- 3 **Examine** the different types of crockery. **Describe** how they look and feel.
- 4 **Identify** what each piece of crockery was used for (for example, storing wine, grinding spices, cooking). How do the materials and design help the object with its use?



There is a feast of fruit and vegetables in these red clay bowls at Kelmarsh Hall.
© Nigel Wallace-Iles

DID YOU KNOW?



Romans ate lots of things we still eat today, like chickpeas, grapes and olives. They also enjoyed things like garum, (a smelly fish sauce), and even dormice.

HINT

When an object is held over a fire, it can get stained with dark soot. Tools for grinding would be rough to help break down the ingredients. A shiny glaze can make pottery look more expensive.

ROMAN PASTIMES



We know Romans enjoyed games because many gaming pieces have been found by archaeologists. The rules of some Roman games have survived too, so they can still be played. Tabla Lusarius was a Roman game where the aim was to make a row, column or diagonal line with your counters.

- 1 Explore** the game pieces in the box. Which ones look familiar to you? **Discuss** where you recognise them from. **Find** similar examples in the case.
- 2 Read** the instructions for the game. **Play** a round of it. What game is it like today?

INSTRUCTIONS TO PLAY TABLA LUSARIUS

Tabla Lusarius is played with two players, or two teams, and two sets of three counters. Games like this need players to think things through to win. The Romans believed they were good for military training. They helped players with strategic thinking which was important for winning battles.

- A** To start, place your counters around the edge of the board. The central horizontal line starts empty, and each player puts a counter on the end of the central vertical line. The remaining counters go either side of the other player's first counter. [Tip: there is a board set up on the right to help you.]
- B** During your turn, you can move one counter along one space to an empty junction or to the centre of the board.
- C** The winner is the first to get three matching counters in a row, either across the board or around the edge.

