

Roman Middlewich **Teachers' Pack**

Contents of loans box (in detail)

Fragments of Roman pottery found at Middlewich (separate details provided). The fragments are in their own box.

REPLICA ITEMS

Toilet set

A pocket toilet set which would have been made of bronze. It contains items used for personal hygiene: an ear-scoop, nail cleaner and tweezers.

Strigil

It was used for scraping oil, sweat and grime from the skin. It might have been part of a kit which also contained an oil flask.

Hairpin

Hairpins were often necessary for the elaborate hairstyles worn by Roman women. Frequently they were made of bone.

Torc

The torc was jewellery worn by the Celtic warriors and was sometimes made of gold. They were booty that was highly prized by the Roman captors. Many torcs were elaborately coiled.

Wax tablet

Beeswax was melted and poured into the shallow cavity of a wooden tablet. It was scraped smooth and formed a reusable writing surface. Letters were scratched into it using a stylus.

Wooden writing tablet

Fine wooden tablets were used for writing on in ink made from soot. The split nib pens were made of reed or metal.

Metal stylus

The pointed end would be used for writing on wax tablets. The blunt end was a spatula and was used for smoothing the wax to erase the writing.

Wooden stylus

The pointed end would be used for writing on wax tablets. The blunt end was a spatula and was used for smoothing the wax to erase the writing.

Scraper for wax tablet

This was used to create a smooth writing surface when the wax was poured in.

Folding frying pan

The folding handle suggests that this was used by someone for whom space was at a premium i.e. a soldier on the move.

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Contents of loans box (in detail)

Silver denarii (19 assorted)

Soldiers would carry coins in a leather or bronze money purse on their wrist. There are copies of silver *denarii* that were minted for the following emperors:

Domitian

- reverse shows Minerva holding a javelin
- reverse shows Minerva holding a spear
- reverse shows Domitian as Augustus

Trajan

- reverse shows Genius with an altar at his feet
- reverse shows Mars

Hadrian

- reverse shows Concordia seated

Septimius Severus

- reverse shows Fortuna
- reverse shows Severus
- reverse shows the emperor performing a sacrifice

Dice

A popular portable game used with board games such as *tabula*. Often the dice were made of glass or bone.

Fibula

A brooch used to fix cloaks. This design is based on a crossbow. It is a reproduction of the remains of a silver one and would have been worn by someone of high status.

Penannular brooch

A common type of brooch worn to fix cloaks.

Bird ring

Rings were commonly worn by men or women. This is the reproduction of a find.

Razor handle

This is the reproduction of a find. It was the handle of a razor. The razor, which is missing, would have been attached at the dolphin's nose. The dolphin is a common decorative motif for the Romans. Being clean-shaven was fashionable although the emperor Hadrian changed that when he grew a beard.

Slide key

This is a reproduction of a find. It was a bronze key used in a tumbler lock used in a door. The Romans had quite intricate lock mechanisms for use on doors and strong-boxes to deter burglars.

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Contents of loans box (in detail)

Amphora

Storage vessels made of clay with two handles. They were made so they could be stacked easily for transporting foodstuffs, liquids etc on long sea voyages. They were also used for storage in a Roman kitchen. This is a replica of one for dried fruit but most *amphorae* were very much larger.

Mortarium

Bowl for grinding foods to make liquids or solids. They came in a variety of sizes. The *mortaria* had grit incorporated into the lining so that food could be ground down with a pestle. These must have been quite frequently from constant use, as broken *mortaria* are common finds on Roman sites.

Money pot

Money was sometimes saved and hidden (buried) in times of crisis. The pot had to be broken to get to the coins.

Samian ware (either a shallow bowl or a cup)

Glossy red pottery which was very fashionable. It was used for tableware. It was imported from Gaul and was made so it could be stacked for transport. Samian ware was issued to the army and also used by civilians. Some of it was highly decorated.

Baby Feeder

This would have contained liquid and was used as a feeding bottle.

Black beaker

A large drinking vessel similar to those made in the Nene Valley. It had a black slip. Note the lack of handles.

Small beaker

A drinking vessel

Book: *Ancient Rome*

Although this book deals with Rome itself many of the artefacts in the photographs were found in Britain. The text and the photographs are of outstanding quality. Many of the replica items in the box are based on items similar to those originals shown in the book.

Also available for loan:

Caligae (replica)

These military sandals were very useful for fast marching (vital in war). They were strong and well ventilated. The iron hobnails were designed to take weight and also to stand up to many miles of marching. (These *caligae* were formerly worn by a member of the Ermine Street Guard, a re-enactment group.)

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Fragments of Roman Pottery (Box A)

The origin of these pottery sherds was evaluated by an archaeologist who could be fairly certain about some of the pieces but with others it was a case of making an educated guess. It is possible that much of the coarse-ware was made locally and much dates to about the 2nd century.

1. Part of a mortarium

This is very uneven and shows signs of having been very poorly fired and made. It may have had a white slip. The red particles may have been haematite, which contains iron.

2. Part of a mortarium

This shows the remains of slip in the dark coloration. The finished colour depended on the amount of oxygen present in the firing conditions so the outside and inside might be different on the same pot.

3. Fine black burnished ware

This is quite fine quality and might be used as something like "best" china. Note the beginning of a pattern above an incised band.

4. A piece of mortarium

5. Section of a small Cheshire sandy-ware jar

This has been poorly fired. The pottery was very porous and absorbed stains and odours easily.

6. Part of a mortarium

Possibly this is part of the same mortarium as fragment 2.

7. Greyware

Note the incised decoration is vertical. The decoration may have been made with something hard like a shell.

8. Part of a mortarium

The grit may have been calcite and haematite (the red specks).

9. Possibly part of the handle of the lid of a skillet (a guess)

It was covered in dark red slip originally.

10. Base of a small grey-ware jar

This has been quite finely made.

11. Part of the rim of a mortarium

12. Rim of a pot. Greyware.

This has been quite well fired and is fine. There is an incised decoration.

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Fragments of Roman Pottery (Box B)

The origin of these pottery sherds was evaluated by an archaeologist. It was possible to be fairly certain about some of the pieces but with some it was a case of making an educated guess. It is possible that much of the coarse-ware was made locally and much dates to about the 2nd century.

1. Part of a mortarium

The different colours may relate to an accident of firing. Slip may have been used for decoration. The grit is often pieces of flint.

2. Part of a black burnished-ware jar.

There is an applied pattern of diagonal lines. The jar would have probably been for domestic use, possibly for storage.

3. Part of a mortarium

There is evidence of some sort of fracture and possibly a layer with grits applied on top. There are the remains of a stamp across the rim. This would be the stamp of the maker: unfortunately it has not been possible to make out what it says.

4. Part of a grey-ware pot

It is probable that the sooty deposit is a sign that this was used for cooking.

5. Possibly part of a lug (a kind of handle)

This has been very coarsely made. There are finger marks where the lug has been pinched on, and then smoothed.

6. Part of a mortarium

The rim has been applied to the inside. The pot has been self-slipped.

7. Spout of a mortarium

8. Part of the neck of a flagon

This would probably have held wine.

9. Part of a small mortarium

10. Fragment of small grey-ware jar

The surface has been "rusticated" which is a decoration made by dabbing wet clay. It might have been used as tableware.

11. Rim of a sandy-ware jar

This type of rim is known as a bead rim. There is an incised decoration. It is possible that there are signs of residue suggesting it might have been used for cooking. This would have been made locally.

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Fragments of Roman Pottery (Box B)

12. Fragment of grey-ware

This has a black burnished design in a lattice pattern.

13. Part of a mortarium

The discoloration may be original and due to firing conditions. Slip may have been applied all over and later worn off.

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Roman Pottery

Pottery was used for a variety of purposes including cooking and storage. A lot of pottery is found on Roman sites because when vessels broke it was often not worthwhile mending them and the pieces were thrown away. Generally pottery was cheap and readily available. An exception was the expensive Samian ware which was imported from Gaul. There are examples of the Romans themselves attempting to mend broken Samian ware.

Archaeologists are able to use pottery

- to build up a picture of life at a site.
- to see what trade patterns existed (both in the origin of the pots and the contents if they were containers).
- to discover how the pottery was made and decorated.
- to help date a site through style, origin and the way it was manufactured.

Originally Roman pottery was imported. It was made mainly in South, Central and Eastern Gaul (parts of France and Germany today). It was transported by river across Europe and arrived in Britain via the English Channel.

As time went on, during the 2nd century AD, major potteries were set up in Britain e.g. at Aldgate, Yorkshire, Colchester, Essex, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Hampshire, Caerlon in South Wales, and the legionary kilns of Holt near Chester.

Pottery was also made by local potteries in Britain, especially pottery that was to be used for everyday storage and cooking. There was pottery being produced for export in Wilderspool in the 2nd century. Nearly all of this pottery was made on a potter's wheel. The evidence for this may be rings of parallel lines made by the potters' fingers as the pot spun. Marks on the base made by the wire which was used to cut the pot from the wheel.

Pottery is generally described by archaeologists as being either **coarse-ware** or **fine-ware**. Coarse-ware was for everyday use, particularly for cooking and storage and also for use at table. Fine-ware is thinner, often glazed and decorated, and was for use at table.

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Roman Pottery

Information sheet 2

Types of pottery commonly found in Britain

- Grey ware (Black Burnished Ware): often used for cooking though finer types might be used at table
- Samian ware : copper-coloured and highly glazed. Used for tableware. Often highly decorated. Imported from Gaul.
- Red Sandy ware. Locally made in Cheshire. Very absorbent so tended to be disposed of readily and replaced.
- Nene Valley ware: made in eastern Britain. Some of this was quite ornate. Typically it had a dark slip.

Some common pots:

Amphora (plural amphorae)

These were large containers made of pottery that were used to transport a range of liquids and solids. They might contain dried fruits, capers and alum from the central Mediterranean islands; olive-oil from southern Spain; sweet wine from southern France. They were also used for storage in the kitchen for dried foods and liquids. The shape enabled them to be stacked in the hold of a ship.

Mortarium (plural mortaria)

Mortaria were pottery vessels which were lined with grit inside and were used for mixing and grinding food in (i.e. a pestle and mortar). They had a spout for pouring and a heavy rim that was easy to hold.

Other uses for pottery:

- briquetage – baked clay used to make pans for use in saltworking.
- chimney-pot – one was found in Middlewich.
- oil lamps – these were used to light rooms and corridors and were usually placed on metal sconces set into a wall. A look at photographs of Roman finds will show a wide variety of decoration on lamps.
- spindle whorl – used as a weight for spinning wool.

A source of information at many different levels is

www.romansussex.co.uk. Type in the word "pot" and many examples will be found, with useful descriptive text.

Roman coins were distributed throughout the empire and were the common form of currency. This made trade easier.

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Curriculum links for Key Stage Two.

Teachers' notes 1

History

The Romans in Britain and particularly Unit 6A (QCA Schemes of work)

Why have people invaded and settled in Britain in the past? A Roman Study.

Science

- Work undertaken in Science on the composition of different soils and rocks may be useful to the children when tackling some of the archaeological issues.
- Showing the effect of evaporation may help children understand the way salt was produced in Roman Middlewich.

- The important tool of an archaeologist of geo-physical surveying (and there is a photograph of such a survey of Harbutt's Field in the guidebook) which can be explained in a science lesson.

English and Literacy

- Brochure/flyer for Roman footwear

- Write the text of a personal diploma (and construct a replica).
- Vocabulary enrichment: learning specialist vocabulary and use of a glossary.
- Cloze activity on the stages of settlement.
- Interview an archaeologist.
- Drama: the dramatic techniques of freeze-frame and hot-seating.

Maths and Numeracy

Many aspects are suggested on a separate sheet.

Geography

A study of Roman Middlewich will enable pupils to:

- Ask geographical questions about the site of Middlewich.
- Use the aerial reconstructive drawings as the basis for a series of sketch-maps.
- Recognise how Middlewich became what it is.
- Relate the study of Middlewich to other Roman sites.

Art and Design

In their study of Roman pottery and other crafts pupils will be taught about:

- Visual and tactile elements such as colour, pattern and texture.
- The materials and process used.
- The roles of different craftspeople in Roman times.



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Teaching points for history at Key Stage Two

Teachers' notes 2

- The Middlewich area was important before Romans came because it was where there was a crossing point on the River Croco. It was also on the track-way to the lowest natural fording place of the River Mersey at Warrington. Crossing points on rivers were of greater importance in the past than they perhaps are today. Middlewich was on the route between many Celtic tribes.
- The Cornovians (and other Celtic tribes) showed a degree of sophistication in terms of their craftsmanship as pre-Roman finds in Middlewich demonstrate.
- The Cornovians were not part of earlier Celtic client states in the South East so when subsidies were withdrawn they were not affected. Thus their experience was different to that of Boudicca and some other Celtic tribes.
- The Cornovians seem to have got on quite well with the Romans and were gradually assimilated through marriage etc.
- The Celtic tribes varied considerably in their attitude to the Roman invaders early on. Much of the early Roman traffic through Middlewich was to quell the warlike *Brigantes* who ruled the area to the north of Middlewich.
- Roman troops were often not Italian.
- Roman occupation was over many hundred years and there were changes within that period. The Romanisation of Middlewich was complete by the 3rd and 4th centuries though remoter farmsteads may have retained their traditional ways.
- The end of Roman Britain was not sudden: it was a slow decline.
- Reconstructive drawings, and similarly the replica items in loans boxes are the result of careful and educated guess-work. What is their value? What are their drawbacks? These are issues that should be discussed with the children. Of course the same is true of historical writing generally. A good historian makes it clear what is hypothesis and what is established fact. The constant striving to get a clear picture of the past is the essence of history.
- Knowing exactly which names the Romans gave to places is quite difficult. The names they gave to Middlewich and Northwich are a case in point and as yet are not completely resolved. *Condate* (meaning "Place at the confluence of two rivers") is often thought to be the name for Roman Northwich and *Salinae* (meaning "Salt springs") the name for Middlewich. The debate continues and is described in detail in *Roman Middlewich* by Tim Strickland (p.8).

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Teaching points for history at Key Stage Two

Teachers' notes 2

- Salt was already being produced (and traded further afield as a discovery of a coin shows) in the area before the Romans, although not on the same scale.
- Salt was not the only commodity being produced in Roman Middlewich. There is archaeological evidence of leatherworking and ironworking.
- As a main artery Middlewich will have seen some of the 'crack' regiments and important individuals pass through even if it was not of such huge importance as other Roman settlements.

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Pieces of the past

Activity sheet 2

Aim: to look carefully at a fragment of Roman pottery and begin to make deductions about its purpose.

Take a piece of pottery (a pottery sherd).

Make a sketch of the sherd.

What size is it? How thick is it?

Write down three words that describe its texture.

What colour is it? Is it the same colour throughout? Is it discoloured? (Why might that be?)

Is there any decoration? Draw or describe this.

What part of the pot was it? (Rim, wall, lid, base, spout, handle etc.)

What is your evidence?

Would it be for the table, the kitchen or something else?

Who do you think might have used it? What makes you think this?

Have you any ideas about what the whole pot might have looked like?

What do you think was it used for? Why do you think that?

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Making shoes for the Romans

Activity sheet 6

Making a simple Cabatina:

The leather used is most likely to have come from a cow, goat or deer. It would have been quite thick and have been prepared using a simple vegetable tanning process.

After the leather has been cut to shape, the shoe is created by cutting a number of slits around the edge of the leather, thoroughly soaking the leather in water, threading a string through the slits and drawing the shoe into shape around a last. When the leather is dry the last is removed and the shoe maintains the shape.

Differences from modern shoes

Roman shoes would often have been individually tailored - even simple shoes have been found with a high degree of decoration, created through punching and stamping the leather. The footwear would also have been available in roughly the same range of sizes as our shoes are today, although the Romans had, on average, smaller feet than we do. There was, however, little protection from the elements built into the footwear as water was expected to flow through the shoe, rather than be kept out.

Better shoes

The Romans had a great influence on footwear construction and brought the industry on by leaps and bounds in Britain. Their most revolutionary introduction was the concept of nailed construction whereby nails were hammered through the layers of leather onto a metal last creating a solid and hardwearing shoe.

Activity: You are a maker of leather footwear, which you sell to Roman troops in Middlewich. Produce an illustrated flyer or brochure advertising your new range.

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Salt-working in Middlewich

Activity sheet 9

Aim: to learn more about salt production in Roman Middlewich. To show understanding of the sequence of production.

Why was salt so useful?

Salt was used to preserve food such as meat or fish.

How is food preserved today?

Salt was also used in processes like dyeing (of wool and cloth) and tanning (turning skins of animals into leather).

How salt was produced at Middlewich

- The brine from the spring was collected in large tanks known as holding-tanks.
- Then it would be moved using wooden buckets and put into salt-pans made of baked clay (briquetage) over a fire.
- The brine would be heated so that the water evaporated leaving the crystals of salt behind.
- The crystals of salt would be scraped from the base and the sides of the salt-pans.
- The salt was finally transported from the site in baskets and sacks.

Either Draw a strip cartoon showing the different stages of this process.

Or Make a flow chart showing each stage in the process of making salt.

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Roman Middlewich: Glossary of terms

Amphora A large container made from clay that was used in the transport of wine, oil and non-perishable items that could not be placed in a wooden case. (These were often re-used to hold something else such as brine waste at the saltworks.)

Auxilia Auxiliary military units attached to the legions. There were about 150,000 soldiers serving as auxiliaries. They were not Roman citizens and were usually from one of the Roman provinces, but were granted citizenship on retirement. They were organized in cohorts.

Barbarian Those living outside the frontiers of the Roman Empire.

Brine Water containing salt.

Briquetage Baked clay used for linings and containers in the salt-works.

Britannia The Roman name for Britain.

Celtic A general term used to describe the tribes of Northern Europe during the Iron Age.

Centurion A rank in the Roman army.

Cohort A military unit within a legion. There were 10 cohorts, each divided into six centuries within each legion. The name also applies to infantry units with the auxiliary army and to units within the Praetorian Guard.

Condante Possible Roman name for Northwich.

Cornovii The Celtic tribe that lived in the area which included Middlewich

Denarius A silver coin of which there were 25 to a gold piece (**Denarii** plural of Denarius)

Diploma Two small engraved bronze tablets bound together with bronze threads. These recorded the privileges granted to the soldier on his discharge. These included citizenship and the right to be married legally.

Flagon Pottery container for wine.

Fort A permanent base for units of auxiliary troops.

Fortress The permanent base for units of Roman legions.

Freedman A slave or servant who had given loyal and trustworthy service and had been given his, or her, freedom.

Garum A sauce made from Mediterranean fish and salt. It was a favourite ingredient in Roman cookery.

Legion The base military unit in the army. Each legion contained 5,000 infantry and 120 cavalry. The soldiers in the legions were all Roman citizens. The number of legions in the Roman army fluctuated between 25 and 33, depending on how many the current emperor decreed there should be.

Mortarium A heavy, pottery dish used to grind foodstuffs into powders, pastes or liquids.

Mosaic A design or scene laid in a floor or wall. This was made of small (about 2 cm. square) coloured and glazed tiles laid in a foundation.

Oppidum A Celtic settlement, often highly fortified.

Principia The central headquarters building in a fort or fortress.

Quernstones The stones used for grinding grain into flour.

Republic The period of the Roman Empire between 510 and 31 BC

Salinae Means salt springs. Possible Roman name for Middlewich

Samian-ware Glazed fine pottery often with a raised design. Originally imported from Gaul.

Sesterius A brass coin worth four asses, or a quarter of a denarius.

Sextarius A unit of measurement for liquids. Equal to one imperial pint (0.568 litre).

Tribe The political and social grouping favoured by the Celts. Headed by a chief.

Woad A blue dye the Celts used to paint their skins in order to instil fear in the enemy

Wroxeter Roman settlement of Viroconium, close to the tribal centre of the Cornovian tribe