



Themes in our Roman collection

There are multiple themes which can be drawn from the objects in the collection such as –

Military – The collection includes fragments of armour and weaponry, a small group of ballista balls (used as ammunition in wooden machines) made from local stone, and a wide variety of horse trappings. Part of an inscribed stone set up by Candidus, the Praefectus (Commander) of a cavalry unit and giving the only known information about the troops stationed in the Malton fort. A copper-alloy saucepan or mess tin belonging to a Roman soldier was made in Italy by Alpicvs who stamped his name on the handle; the owner Lucius Servenius Super punched his name on the back.

Building Materials - Substantial amounts of wood are likely to have been used in both the military and civilian buildings. This has not survived but other objects connect us directly to the buildings of Roman Malton, where, as an important fort and settlement for over 400 years, there was a significant re-building and renovation. The Museum's collections contain a wealth of such artefacts including worked and carved stones, stone and clay roof tiles, painted plaster and a roof finial. Favourites include a Clay tile with child's footprint – the story of this young child whose footprint is preserved in the roof tile may never be known, but its survival is a vivid link to a Roman family. Painted plaster from a building south of the river showing a bearded male, perhaps the god Jupiter.

Industrial Items- Roman Malton/Norton was a busy industrial town producing goods for local inhabitants and the regional markets. From bronze and gold ornaments to “mass produced” Norton pottery, Malton was at the centre of a sophisticated trading network. The museum's collection includes material from Norton and Crambeck pottery kilns, and residues from jet, bone and metal working. An inscribed stone plaque recording the presence of a goldsmith's shop was found in modern Norton and is the only one currently known from Roman Britain.

Food Production and Consumption -The Roman fort at Malton depended on the local area for much of their foodstuffs, although expensive wines and olive oil would be imported from the continent. Malton Museum has a wealth of objects illustrating food production and consumption from Malton/Norton and the surrounding area including hand querns, mortaria, knives, a cheese press and other kitchen equipment. Fragments of glass and pottery show that many different forms of vessels were in use, and the collection includes examples of amphora in which oil, wine and other liquids were imported.



Personal ornament and objects of everyday life - A wide range of objects illustrating aspects of everyday life are in the collections. Jewelry includes a gold fastener looking as good as the day it was made, brooches some enameled, jet, glass and metal bangles, hair combs and pins and a variety of rings including a key ring. An intaglio showing a hare was probably from another ring.

Sewing and weaving were among the domestic duties in a Roman household, and are well represented, whilst counters and a set of dice indicate leisure activities.

Religion - Religion, which played an important part in Roman life, is less well represented in the collections than other aspects of life, although three small figures of gods from Malton, including Hercules and Venus, are held in other museums. The Norton kilns specialised in pots with applied motifs possibly representing the god Tiranis. A building in the vicus had been decorated with painted plaster showing images of the Roman gods and goddesses; it had fallen in and was recovered in excavation. The collection also includes examples of votive objects and amulets. Other items include a Norton grey ware pot with motifs showing wheels and blacksmith tools, perhaps connected with a Smith God. And a restored section of painted plaster showing a goddess, now known as the 'Malton Goddess'.

Burial - The museum's collection of cremation and inhumation burials illustrates the range of Roman burial practice.

A group of 29 infant graves, found just outside the fort, included that of a young child buried with a ring and a small bear both made of jet. The beautifully carved bear was not a toy but was there to protect the young child in the afterlife. A few adult skeletons, some fragments of inscribed tombstones, and some fine cremation urns, some containing bones, have been recovered along the main roads leading out of the town. The collection also includes inhumations from Crambeck and Langton, a jet bear and ring from a child's burial, part of an altar set up by Scirus to the god Mars Riga. Rigas was a Celtic deity and is here associated with Mars, the Roman god of war.

Roman Coins - The coin collection has a high proportion of coins from local excavations. This part of the collection is currently being researched and more information will be updated as content becomes available.



Rural Life- The items from two excavations at Langton Villa include household objects, farming implements, painted plaster and hypocaust supports. A deep well contained among other things animal bone, pottery and a mould for pewter plates suggesting evidence of some industrial activity.