



ROMANS ON THE DON



WHEN THE ROMANS ARRIVED IN DONCASTER
by **BILL BEVAN**

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INTRODUCTION DIGGING DONCASTER'S ROMAN PAST

This is the story of archaeology, aggregates and the Romans on the Don. Since 1984 aggregates companies have funded archaeological excavations on Iron Age and Romano-British sites at ten quarries in the Doncaster district. As a result, we now know much more about life in the region around the time the Romans arrived here in the 50s AD, about 10 years after they invaded Britain for Emperor Claudius in 43 AD.

When the Roman army first marched north to the River Don, they found a landscape full of people. Doncaster had long been settled by families farming land divided into large fields and living in timber round houses. The Romans' impact was to be massive.

They built forts and roads, as they always did when taking control of new territories.

Perhaps their most enduring legacy was Doncaster itself, which grew up around the fort of Danum, named after the River Don. Pottery kilns were set up south of the town and an economy based on coins was introduced for the first time. New forms of

domestic architecture were adopted by many families, who replaced their round houses with rectangular ones. Some people even built heated bath-houses.

Excavations at aggregates quarries have provided a view of some of these changes and told us about the lives of people who lived in Doncaster before and after the Romans arrived.



IRON AGE

The Iron Age is the archaeological period that begins when iron was first used to make tools, approximately 800 years before the Romans conquered Britain, and ends with that conquest.

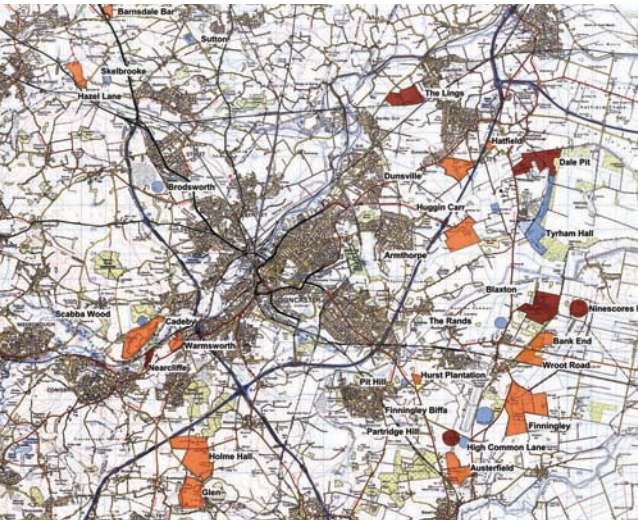
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ARCHAEOLOGY AND AGGREGATES

Companies need to gain planning permission to begin a new quarry or extend an existing one. Archaeologists working in the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service assess whether there are likely to be archaeological remains

destroyed by the quarry. They use a database comprising information on archaeological finds that have been collected over the years, known as the Sites and Monuments Record. This helps in making decisions about whether companies

BELOW
Aggregates quarries in Doncaster



have to fund archaeological excavations. If they do, archaeologists then investigate the site before the JCBs and dumper trucks arrive.

The history of quarrying in Britain goes back at least to the Roman period. Danum fort was at one time rebuilt with limestone walls, while Roman roads were constructed from the nearest source of suitable stone. Doncaster limestone can also be found in the 700-year-old walls and roofs of York Minster and Westminster Hall. 'Aggregates' is the name

given to crushed limestone, sand and gravel that is used in road building and general construction. Approximately 6 million tonnes of aggregates are quarried in the Doncaster district every year.



LEFT
Soil at Austerfield stripped ready for archaeologists to begin

CROPS, AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS AND DONCASTER'S HIDDEN HERITAGE



ABOVE
Cropmarks of Iron Age to Romano-British fields survive in a modern field near to houses

Many of Doncaster's Iron Age and Roman sites do not survive above ground because of centuries of ploughing and development. The extent of this hidden heritage was first revealed by archaeologists who flew over the region between the 1940s and 1970s. Vast buried landscapes came to light from the air, visible as cropmarks. These otherwise invisible ancient worlds were revealed by the crops that grew above them, because crops tend to grow taller over the deeper soils that fill ditches and shorter above the foundations of walls.

Once photographed, the features revealed by the crops' growth could be drawn on to maps and the full extent of these cropmarks plotted.

The Roman fort at Rossington Bridge was one of the first sites to be photographed, in the 1960s.

The true extent of the cropmarks began

to be identified during the 1970s, when archaeologist Derrick Riley flew hundreds of missions. While piloting one of Sheffield Aero Club's small planes he took photographs of the cropmarks with a hand-held camera. He discovered a regular pattern of square and rectangular fields, seen as the lines of boundary ditches dug to enclose the fields. Most were arranged into 50-to-100-metre-wide strips divided by long parallel ditches, which led Riley to call them 'brickwork fields'. Other sites could also be seen within this overall pattern.



ABOVE
A square enclosure, droweay and fields discovered near Rossington

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ABOVE
We don't know whether Iron Age people in Doncaster resisted the Romans, but there is no evidence for any major warfare

IRON AGE TRIBES OF THE DON

It is difficult to identify the exact locations of tribal boundaries in the Iron Age. Borders may not have been marked on the ground and not every tribe was a single group of people with a central chief. It is only because of the Romans that we have named tribes linked to specific regions. The Roman authorities needed some way of organising their new province. Surviving Roman documents mention two tribes in this area. The River Don may have been the border between these, with the Brigantes to the north and the Corieltauvi to the south. The river later became the boundary between two Roman administrative areas.

Sometimes two ditches ran in parallel 10–40 metres apart, forming lanes which were probably droveways for moving livestock. Outlines of building foundations were also glimpsed here and there amongst the fields. What Riley had discovered were the vast buried remains of ancient agricultural landscapes.

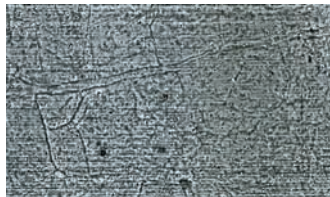
DATING THE BURIED LANDSCAPES

It is difficult to date cropmark landscapes without finding objects from specific periods or material suitable for scientific dating either by surface collection or excavation. The ones photographed by Riley were clearly very old, but how long they had been buried was something of a mystery until he observed that the line of a Roman road cut through some of the fields. The fields must have been earlier than the road.



Based on the photographs taken by Riley and others, archaeological excavations have been recommended by South Yorkshire Archaeology

Service whenever aggregates extraction has been planned in areas where cropmarks have been recorded. The resulting work has told us much about ancient Doncaster. Objects found by excavation give an approximate date for when a ditch was filled in.



ABOVE
Buried ancient fields and a lane are revealed by geophysical survey

Roman pottery and other artefacts have been found in many of the filled-in ditches, but often near the top, which suggests that the ditches themselves were dug some time earlier. Rare finds of Iron Age pottery suggest that the fields originated in the centuries before the Romans arrived but stayed in use throughout the Roman period.

LEFT
Archaeologists dig a Romano-British settlement in Doncaster

BELOW
Motorists pass this buried ancient enclosure everyday without realising it's there



FIELDWALKING

Archaeologists can locate and partly date buried features by fieldwalking on ploughed fields. Objects turned up by the plough are systematically collected and plotted on a map. Concentrations of finds are likely to indicate buried features. Dating the finds will indicate when those features were in use.

GEOPHYSICS

Geophysics is a way of surveying buried features without disturbing the ground surface. One method measures the magnetic characteristics of the soil. These can be altered by such actions as digging ditches and pits or heating the ground surface below hearths and kilns. The magnetic traces of these activities can survive for thousands of years. Geophysicists use a computer to draw a plan of magnetic responses to show where there are probably archaeological features.



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FARMING THE FIELDS

Archaeologists can tell that Doncaster's ancient fields were farmed for arable crops and to pasture livestock.

Groups of fields were separated by small areas of managed woodland or coppice. People and livestock travelled between the fields along droveways, which linked scattered farmsteads.

Very deep and wide boundary ditches surrounded the fields, and the soil excavated from them was piled into high earthen banks running alongside. The boundaries were much larger than was needed simply to stop livestock wandering or to provide drainage.

Archaeologists have found that many of the Iron Age and Romano-British field ditches were regularly cleaned out after becoming partly filled. Ditches slowly silt up if left alone and eventually become filled in with soil as a result of erosion from the sides and adjacent earthen bank. The people who built them must have invested a lot of time and resources to first dig and then keep them cleaned.

This suggests that the ditches were important, defining boundaries between neighbours and demonstrating a family's right to farm the land.

Evidence throughout Britain suggests that agriculture intensified under the Romans. Productivity was increased by taking more land into production and introducing more efficient types of tools, land drainage, crop rotation and new breeds. Demand increased as the Roman authorities were keen to exploit the economic potential of their new province and because there was a significant population of administrators and soldiers, who didn't farm. One Roman scholar writing in the 3rd century AD described Britain as a land rich in harvests with abundant pasture that produced a lucrative source of tribute. A century later, another writer described how corn had been shipped from Britain to the Rhine until attacks from outside the Empire stopped this.

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LIFE INDOORS



Discoveries of Iron Age or Romano-British buildings are rare in the Doncaster area. Farmsteads that have been excavated had only one or two buildings, though we don't know what has been lost to ploughing or more recent development. People lived in timber round houses during the Iron Age, houses thatched with straw or reeds and walled with wicker hurdles (wattle) covered in dried clay (daub). Rectangular buildings and building in stone became popular in many parts of Britain after the Romans arrived. These were sometimes

built alongside or replaced earlier round houses. Two timber rectangular buildings dating to the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD were excavated at Bessacarr.

There are very few large Romanised farms (villas) known in South Yorkshire and all come from the Doncaster area. Excavated sites include Oldcoates near Doncaster, Stancil near Tickhill and Conisbrough. This may be because of the proximity of Danum and its network of roads. A bath-house found at the Hazel Lane quarry, in Hampole, was probably once part of a villa complex. If so, the other buildings have long since been quarried away.



MULTICULTURAL ROMANO-BRITISH

Most of the people who lived in Roman Britain were not Roman. Most were British, with a cosmopolitan mix of people from all over the Empire. Britons came into greater contact with Roman ways of doing things, such as living in towns, building new styles of houses and using money. Some people chose to take on these new ways, while others resisted. British culture would have influenced the Romans also. Roman and British gods were often worshipped together, each religion influencing the other. In the centuries that Rome ruled Britain, later generations may not have thought of themselves as Roman or British but as Romano-British.

RIGHT

Romans influenced many aspects of life in Britain, including the ways people ate. The couple cook and eat using pots made in local kilns, while their parents still prefer wooden bowls

ROMAN POWER



RIGHT
The Roman road to Danum is now followed by the line of the A638. Here the Roman road cuts through earlier fields

Though Doncaster town did not exist before the Romans arrived, the word its name is based on probably did. When the Roman authorities built a fort on the banks of the River Don they called it Danum, meaning the place or river called Danu.

RIGHT
The first Roman fort at Rossington was built in an area of Iron Age fields. The families would have been evacuated from their homes to make way. The fort was a base for extending Roman rule. A small settlement of camp followers may have existed outside the fort



This was the name that the local Iron Age inhabitants gave to the river. Danu may have been named after an Iron Age goddess, as there is a Danu in Irish myths and a Don in Welsh legends. The Romans commonly used local names to name their forts.

Romans on the Don

It was one way of demonstrating power, linking their new authority with existing traditions.

The town originated as an informal village that grew up outside the fort, known as a vicus. The vicus comprised army followers and opportunists who supplied the army with a range of services and goods not provided within the military system. Shops, workshops and even brothels would have



huddled beside the fort. Danum's first fort was built from timber in about 70 AD, to house approximately 500 soldiers. It was demolished in the 2nd century AD and replaced with a smaller fort

ROMAN ROADS

The Romans built well-engineered surfaced roads to speed up movement of soldiers, civilian administrators, goods and messages. Roads led from Danum to Lincoln and to Castleford and York. The stone used to make the roads would have come from nearby quarries. This may have been the earliest use of aggregates in Doncaster.

Romans on the Don



LEFT
The Romans used surveying equipment to align their roads

ROMAN POWER



protected by clay, gravel and limestone walls.

Danum was not the first Roman fort in the Doncaster region. This was built at Rossington Bridge sometime in the 50s AD, at the same time as forts were built at Templebrough

(Rotherham) and Chesterfield. Rossington fort was much larger than Danum, housing up to half a legion of 2,500 men. This may have been a task force sent north to gain control of what was then the northern limit of the new province.

THE DANUM SHIELD

Fragments of a shield were found under the rampart of Danum fort during excavations in 1971. It was made of one-centimetre-thick three-ply wood, with outer layers of alder encasing an oak inner core. The shield was flat and rectangular with rounded ends.

A round domed iron boss was fixed to the centre of the outer side.

Chemical analysis indicated traces of a leather covering, while tiny fragments of curved bronze sheet suggested Celtic-style decoration. The shield dated to the late 1st century AD and was probably used by a British auxiliary soldier.

So far, it is a unique find from Roman Britain. The remains of the shield, alongside a reconstruction, are on display in Doncaster Museum.

ABOVE
The Danum shield as it may have looked in action

Archaeological evidence shows it was only occupied for a short time, perhaps just a few years.

Another small fort has been found as a cropmark at Burghwallis, to the north of Doncaster. The fort probably dates from between the late 1st and early 2nd century and may have housed a unit of auxiliaries. It may have been built as part of the general garrisoning of the region.

WHO WERE ROMAN SOLDIERS?

There were probably very few 'real' Romans living in Doncaster. Part of the garrison at Rossington Bridge would have been legionaries who were Roman citizens, though not necessarily from Rome itself. The rest of the garrison would have been auxiliaries drawn from the provinces, who could have come from Gaul (modern France), Germany or Italy. We know that the Danum garrison during the 4th century AD came from Hungary originally, though by then it probably recruited from Britain. An inscription on a stone altar from Danum shows the provincial origins of at least one member of the garrison there in the late 2nd century or early 3rd century AD. The inscription is made to the trinity of mother Goddesses and is dedicated to Marcus Nantonius Oriotalus. While his first name is Roman, the second two are Latinised versions of provincial names.



MONEY AND MAKING POTS

Some aspects of life under the Romans were very different to the local Iron Age culture. The Romans used coins as a way of standardising purchasing. By contrast, in the Iron Age people probably bartered for goods. Another major impact of the Roman arrival in

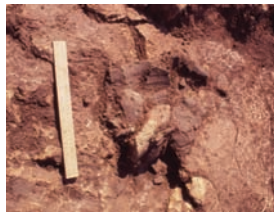
Doncaster, for which there is a lot of archaeological evidence, was the creation of a large-scale pottery industry. Pots were few and far between in the Iron Age. This was not because people didn't know how to make them but because they preferred other materials such as leather, wood and metal to make cooking, eating and storage vessels. Those Iron Age pots that are found were made by building up coils of clay. We do not know what people used these pots for, but they may have had a special significance. One almost complete pot found in pieces at Brodsworth has been put back together

and is now on display at Doncaster Museum.

Less than 50 years after the Romans arrived in the region, pots were being made and used in large numbers. These were made by turning clay on wheels, which produced a better quality ware. Potteries have been found at Auckley, Blaxton, Cantley and Rossington. Dishes, jars, bowls, cooking pots and colanders were manufactured there, including oven-to-table wares for cooking and serving food. Mortaria were another common product. These were heavy bowls with a gritty surface and spout used to grind and mix ingredients for meals.



ABOVE
Two fragments of a Roman vessel, probably an amphora



RIGHT
A Roman pot being excavated



DONCASTER'S FIRST NAMED PEOPLE

Local potters are the earliest named people we know of in Doncaster, because some stamped their names on their products, especially on mortaria. Sarrius, Secundua and Baro are some of the names that have survived on pieces of pottery lost to the soil for almost 2,000 years. They lived and worked in Rossington between 135 and 190 AD. Other potters included Virinus who worked at Cantley, and Reditas and Sace based somewhere near Doncaster.

Sarrius was the most productive potter we know about. He moved from Warwickshire to set up his potteries in Rossington in 135 AD. After 35 years he returned home, where he continued to make pots. The names of Secundua or Setibogius were sometimes stamped on mortaria alongside that of Sarrius. They may have been his business partners or apprentices.

ABOVE
Large-scale pottery kilns were established soon after the Romans arrived. One was owned by a potter called Sarrius from the Midlands

BRODSWORTH (PICKBURN LEYS)



ABOVE
One of the Iron Age pots
found at Brodsworth

In 1984, the South Yorkshire Archaeology Field and Research Unit were called in to investigate, when limestone quarrying began at Brodsworth quarry.

The archaeologists found evidence for a small farmstead. This comprised two timber round houses and a droveway leading to fields. The earliest pottery found here was made just a few years before the Romans arrived. Other finds from the farmstead date to the 3rd century AD. This tells us that people were living here for at least 200 years.

DEMOLITION AND REBUILDING

The archaeologists opened a series of trenches where cropmark evidence suggested there were buried remains. One of these trenches revealed the south-east corner of a rectangular compound, which may have surrounded a farmstead. A lot of effort had gone in to digging the ditch,

which was substantial and had been cut through solid limestone bedrock.

The ditch had not simply been allowed to silt up over time. Instead it appears to have been deliberately filled in and then re-excavated on several occasions. Whenever people refilled the ditch, they placed objects in the freshly dumped soil. The archaeologists could tell this because some objects had been left behind when the ditch was subsequently re-excavated in the Roman period. The earliest objects were two almost complete Iron Age hand-made pottery jars, dating from just before the Roman invasion. Other finds included fragments of animal bones and a rotary quern, which would have been used to grind corn into flour.

There are many reasons why the Iron Age farmers might have wanted to bury these objects. It may have been a way of stating their ownership of the boundary or to thank their gods. Local communities and families often took care



to bury objects in places that were important to them, in a time before title deeds proved ownership of land.

FARM ANIMALS ALONG A LANE

A second trench found a lane that ran between fields towards the compound. The ditches on either side of this droveway would have allowed livestock to be moved through the fields without the animals trampling any crops growing to either side.



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BRODSWORTH (PICKBURN LEYS)

The ditches of the lane had been cleaned of silt at least three times. An almost complete jar, made in the pottery kilns south-east of Doncaster, and a coin of the Roman Emperor Valerian dating from 257 AD were found. These finds show that

the droveway was built after the Romans arrived. This may indicate increasing demand for farm produce under the Romans, which would have meant that larger numbers of livestock were kept in the neighbouring fields.

BELOW
The two round houses at Brodsworth may have looked like this



TIMBER ROUND HOUSES

Archaeologists thought they would find more field boundaries in the third archaeological trench. Instead, they discovered foundations of two timber round houses that had not been visible on the aerial photographs. One was 12.5 metres in diameter, with a south-east-facing door.

The other was slightly smaller. Inside the foundations were 2 post holes that would have held timber posts to support the roof. Little else survived of the buildings because of damage caused by ploughing since the Roman period. Both houses were built in the corners of neighbouring fields, little more than 20 metres apart.





HAMPOLE (HAZEL LANE)



The wealth of cropmarks seen on aerial photographs of the proposed CatPlant quarry at Hampole led to a major series of archaeological works, culminating in excavations by Archaeological Services WYAS in one area during 1997 and by Thames Valley Archaeological Services

between 2002 and 2003 in the other. A lot of work had gone into investigating the site prior to the excavations, including analysis of aerial photographs, geophysical survey and fieldwalking. The results paint a detailed picture of life here in the Iron Age and Roman period.

ABOVE
Excavating the foundations of the bath-house walls at Hampole

FARMING WHEN THE ROMANS ARRIVE

The oldest site excavated was a large rectangular compound that had been built on an area of higher land, with streams to the north and south.

The compound was enclosed within an earthen bank and a deep ditch, with an entrance in the eastern side.

Surrounding it was a network of fields, which were assumed to be contemporary.

These ditches had been allowed to silt up, rather than being dug out to keep them open. This suggests that the compound was built and used for only a short time.

We can assume that no one was using the site by the time the soil had accumulated in the ditches.

The small amount of pottery found in the ditches was mostly jars, some made in South Yorkshire, dating from the 1st and 2nd centuries AD. This suggests that the compound may have been in use during the Roman invasion and for a generation after. Other finds included fragments of bone

from cows, pigs and sheep or goats.

The quantity of finds was much smaller than expected for a 2nd century AD farmstead in the Doncaster area. It is more likely that the site was being used for corralling animals pastured in the surrounding fields.

TAKING A BATH

Later excavations found a very different site about 300 metres to the north of the compound. Archaeologists discovered the foundations of an L-shaped building. Walls were made from mortared limestone and there was evidence for a tiled roof. As they dug further, they realised it was one of only three Roman bath-houses known in Doncaster.

From documentary evidence and excavations elsewhere we know how the bath-house building would have been used. A wood-burning boiler located outside of the building heated air that circulated underneath the building's raised floor in a hypocaust.

HAMPOLE (HAZEL LANE)

The air flowed up narrow chimneys built into the walls and escaped via vents under the roof eaves.

The Hampole bath-house had four rooms. The large room was built over part of the hypocaust and would probably have been a warm room. There was a small room next to this, which may have been the hot room. Built on to the side of the fourth room was a small semi-circular wall that probably retained a cold plunge pool.

Bathers either entered via the cold plunge room or through an unheated room



LEFT
Fragments of painted wall plaster from the bath-house at Hampole

attached to the south of the warm room. On entering, they exchanged clothes for a towel and put on wooden sandals, as hypocaust floors could get very hot.

Pieces of wall plaster were found, which were painted with a red, green, blue and yellow design on a white background.



BELOW
The Bath house at Hampole as it may have looked

HAMPOLE (HAZEL LANE)

Unfortunately, not enough survived to be able to piece the decoration together. From other sites, we know that it probably depicted a mythical figure, with a pleated or twisted patterned border. The bath-house was probably privately owned. It would originally have been sited next to a house, but any evidence for this must, unfortunately, have been

quarried away before being identified.

A large quantity of broken pottery was found at the bath-house, most of which was made during the 3rd century AD. The majority of the vessels were oven-to-table wares from the pottery kilns south-east of Doncaster.

BELOW

Excavating a brick hypocaust pillar. The bath-house floor above the hypocaust was supported on pillars like this one



These include dishes, bowls, cooking pots and a mortar for grinding cooking ingredients. There were also jars from Lincolnshire and Dorset, mortars made in Warwickshire and cooking pots from the Thames Estuary. The pottery shows that the bath-house dates from between 50 and 200 years later than the compound to the south. This may be the farm of a native family who grew wealthy by

supplying the Romans with farm produce. Perhaps one generation became inspired to live more of a Roman lifestyle. Or perhaps this is where a Roman citizen, possibly a retired soldier, obtained land to set up his own farm. Archaeology can't answer these specific questions, but it can throw up possibilities from the past.

THE WATER'S LOVELY

The Romans knew how to make the most of bathing as a recreation. Towns and forts had public baths – the equivalent of modern leisure centres. Romans didn't use soap, unlike Iron Age Britons. Instead, oil was rubbed into the skin, after the heat had opened skin pores, and then scraped off (using a tool called a strigil). Baths were arranged in a specific order so that bathers went from a cold to a hot room and back again via an intermediate warm room. At public baths you could lift weights, play ball games and buy 'fast food' snacks, such as mussels and whelks. The town of Bath is named after the famous Roman baths, which were part of a religious centre attached to a temple. Many wealthy families also had their own private bath-houses built next to their homes. This indicated to others their high status and wealth, as well as how 'Roman' they were.



STAINTON (HOLME HALL)



LEFT
Excavating the surviving
base of one of the kilns
at Holme Hall

Archaeological work at Holme Hall quarry started on behalf of Tarmac in 1994, when the area was fieldwalked for finds. Fragments of Roman pottery were found in one area of a ploughed field. As these were thought to indicate the site of

a Romano-British farmstead, a geophysical survey was then conducted, which identified a number of possible features, including a kiln, a circular compound and a number of boundary ditches.



ABOVE
The kilns at Holme Hall were probably used to bake bread

Archaeologists from ARCUS returned to excavate the site in 2005, after planning permission for the quarry was granted.

SITTING DOWN TO DINE?

The main feature found during excavation was a circular compound enclosed by a bank and ditch. Inside, a large dump of burnt and cracked river cobbles were found next to

a hearth. The cobbles would have been heated in the fire then placed in containers to heat water. Was this to cook food or to create sauna-like conditions in a sweatlodge? We'll never be sure, but thousands of animal bones found on the site suggest that a lot of meat was cooked here. An impressive amount of pottery was found at Holme Hall – a total of over 5,000 pieces from at least 161 vessels.

STAINTON (HOLME HALL)

Some of the vessels are Iron Age, from a few years before the Romans arrived, including a jar and a bowl. The majority dates from between the late 2nd century AD and the end of the 3rd century AD, with some as late as the middle of the 4th century AD. The amount of pottery and its dates of manufacture suggest that this was a farmstead that was occupied for at least 250 years.

Nearly all of the pottery dating to the 2nd century AD is local, except for small amounts from Dorset, Warwickshire and central France. In the 3rd

century AD more of the pots were made in Derbyshire. By the 4th century, local pottery was largely replaced by vessels made in Lincolnshire, East Yorkshire and Cambridgeshire. The number of table wares increased during the

3rd century. Does this show that the people living here chose to eat in increasingly Roman ways over the generations?



No building foundations were found during the excavation. It is only the hearth and the quantity of pottery and other finds that let us know people used to live here. The remains of their houses may have been lost to later ploughing, or perhaps they were originally built on foundations laid on the ground surface. Whatever the Romano-British buildings were like, the sheer amount of pottery and the quality of the other finds show that a wealthy family lived here.

Finds from the site give a snapshot of human life nearly 2,000 years ago. Broken quern stones tell us that corn was ground into flour here. An iron rod was used for goading oxen while ploughing. Two styli, the pens of their day, were used to inscribe words in a wax tablet.



ABOVE
A dragon for a cloak. This enamelled copper alloy brooch would have pinned a cloak around someone's shoulders at Holme Hall almost 2,000 years ago

LEFT
This beautifully decorated stud hints that a wealthy family lived at Holme Hall

An enamelled copper alloy stud probably held a wooden box together, while a copper alloy brooch (designed as a stylised dragon) would have pinned clothes in place.

The latest finds from Holme Hall were three pieces of a late 4th century AD jar with a lid. Was this the date the family eventually left the site after possibly as many as 12 generations?

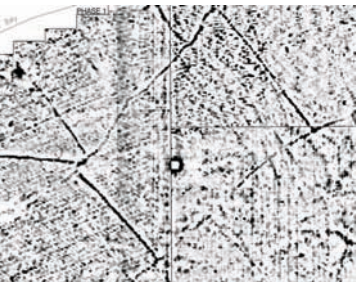
BAKING BREAD

One of the distinctive aspects of Romano-British life at Holme Hall was baking bread in ovens outside the compound. The bases of three ovens survived below the reach of the plough. Each was a circular hollow lined on the bottom with limestone blocks, burnt by the heat during baking. A channel on one side of each hearth acted as a flue to draw in air.



BARNSDALE BAR

Barnsdale Bar is on the border between South and North Yorkshire. When Darrington Quarries applied for permission to extend their limestone



ABOVE
Buried field ditches appear as dark lines on a geophysical survey

quarry to the south here, a series of archaeological investigations were carried out. Archaeological Services WYAS undertook most of the work, with consultant Alison Deegan analysing aerial photographs in 2000. Alison identified an extensive cropmark landscape of fields, compounds, boundaries and lanes surrounding the quarry. A geophysical survey confirmed that the quarry

extension would destroy an area of fields and compounds, and an archaeological excavation followed.

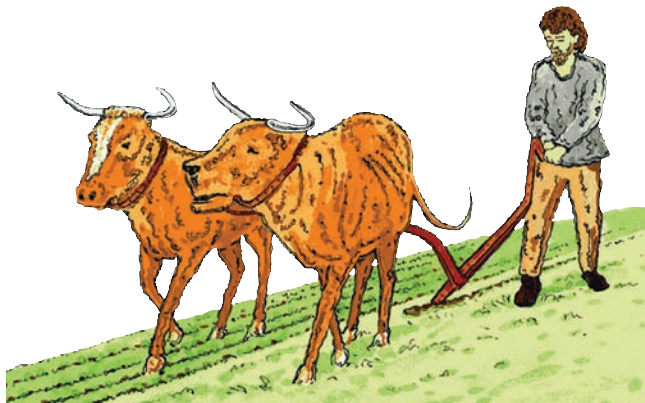
AGRICULTURAL INTENSIFICATION

A rectangular compound enclosed within a single ditch was revealed. Other ditches radiated out from the sides of the compound, probably forming field boundaries. The compound ditch cut across a small circular gully that probably encircled an earlier burial mound. It is possible that the mound was standing when the ditch was dug and that the compound was deliberately aligned on the burial.

A small metal object was found in the gully of the possible burial mound, which was either an earring, part of a brooch or a link in an ornamental chain. Unfortunately, it wasn't distinctive enough to provide a date for the feature. Pottery was found in the fill of the compound ditch and included a decorated piece of Samian bowl, showing a scene from

classical mythology – Perseus holding the head of Medusa. Samian was a high-quality table ware made in central France and exported throughout the Roman Empire. The style of the piece found at Barnsdale Bar is typical of a prolific 2nd century AD potter called Cinnamus. Most of the other pottery was made in kilns near Doncaster between the 2nd and 4th centuries AD.

Burnt grains found in the compound's ditch were radiocarbon dated – they were burnt somewhere between 262 and 539 AD. This scientific date confirms the pottery evidence and suggests the compound was in use during the Roman period and didn't originate in the Iron Age.



BARNSDALE BAR



The excavations in South Yorkshire were just to the south of the North Yorkshire part of the quarry, where work took place during the 1980s and 1990s. This work suggested that there was at least one Iron Age farmstead with fields, to the north.

There appears to have been a south-westwards expansion from the farmstead during the 2nd and 3rd centuries AD, which involved more land being turned into fields.

The compound and field ditches excavated in South Yorkshire were part of this development. This may have been in response to an increased demand for food as a result of the Roman occupation. The proximity of a small Roman fort at Burghwallis, 3 km to the south, may have been an important factor, though it is unknown for how long the fort was occupied.

OTHER EXCAVATIONS

Other sites have been excavated, because of cropmarks suggesting ancient fields, at the locations of proposed quarries at Austerfield, Dunsville, Finningley and at the Lings between Barnby Dun and Stainforth.

Excavations at each confirmed the presence of Iron Age to Roman ditched boundaries that defined large fields.

The results helped to reinforce our knowledge of just how extensive these fields once were in the Doncaster area.

Each excavation also gave insights into activities of people living almost 2,000 years ago. Hundreds of pieces of locally made pottery dating from the 1st century AD to the early 3rd century AD were found at Finningley, suggesting that there was a Romano-British farmstead or were pottery kilns nearby. A pit at Austerfield was filled with earth containing 20 pieces of a black and dark brown hand-made pot, assumed to be Iron Age in date, into which a rotary corn-grinding quern was later buried. At Dunsville,

there was a large compound enclosed by a single ditch and approached by a droveway. This was probably used to pen herds of cattle or flocks of sheep. The field boundaries at the Lings were found to have been created over a long time period rather than being dug all at once.

Finningley was excavated by MAP Archaeological Consultancy for LaFarge between 2000 and 2003. South Yorkshire Archaeology Service and Northern Archaeological Associates excavated at Hanson's Austerfield quarry in 1997 and 2000. The Lings was excavated in 1998 by Northern Archaeological Associates for Tarmac. Marshall's quarry at Lings Farm near Dunsville was excavated by Mr J.R. Magilton in 1974 for Doncaster Metropolitan Borough Council.



FIND OUT MORE

DONCASTER MUSEUM

Many Iron Age and Roman finds are displayed in Doncaster Museum. The award-winning permanent exhibition 'By River and Road' tells the story of Doncaster and its region through the twin routes of the River Don and the Great North Road.

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Chequer Road,
Doncaster DN1 2AE



SOUTH YORKSHIRE ARCHAEOLOGY SERVICE

The primary role of the South Yorkshire Archaeology Service is to help protect and preserve South Yorkshire's archaeological heritage. The Service provides advice on the management of archaeological sites to Doncaster, Rotherham, Barnsley and Sheffield councils.

SYAS also maintains the Sites and Monuments Record (SMR) and promotes public understanding and appreciation of the local historic environment through an annual Archaeology Day and publication of a regular round-up of recent work, Archaeology in South Yorkshire.

To make an appointment to visit the SMR:

t: 0114 273 6428
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w: www.sheffield.gov.uk/SYAS
a: South Yorkshire Archaeology Service,
Development Services,
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THE VICUS

The Vicus is an Iron Age and early Roman re-enactment society that interprets history through the medium of experimental archaeology, reconstruction and living history. The photographs of Romano-British people in this booklet have been kindly provided by the Vicus. Their website has instructions on how to make the Roman auxiliary shield found at Doncaster.

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Romans on the Don

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Romans on the Don



Explore the story of the Romans by the River Don.

Hidden ancient landscapes have been revealed by aerial photography. Archaeological excavations of some of these landscapes in advance of aggregates quarrying have told us much about life in Doncaster before and after the Romans arrived.

This booklet has been produced by inHeritage in partnership with South Yorkshire Archaeology Service.

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*If you would like to find out more about Romans on the Don please visit our website:
www.doncaster.gov.uk/romansonthedon*

