

Archaeology 2017

We live in a golden age for archaeology in this country. Developers are compelled by law to permit and even sometimes fund the exploration of sites before any construction work can begin, thus providing opportunities for professionals such as Oxford Archaeology. Amateur groups like the HDAS regularly contribute to a greater understanding of the history and development of local communities. The Portable Antiquities Scheme, which encourages metal detectorists to report their finds to a local finds officer, has been astonishingly successful. To date some 1,313,634 objects have been reported. Here just a flavour of some of the most recent significant archaeological discoveries:

1. **The camp of Julius Caesar.** Excavations at Ebbsfleet near Pegwell bay in Kent strongly suggest that this is the site of his first camp on British soil. If confirmed then we have the first Roman stepping stone into the 400 year Roman occupation of this country. This discovery formed part of a recent Digging for Britain programme, still available on the iPlayer. The Guardian, along with the other broadsheets, gave the find prominent coverage. The Guardian article can be found here:

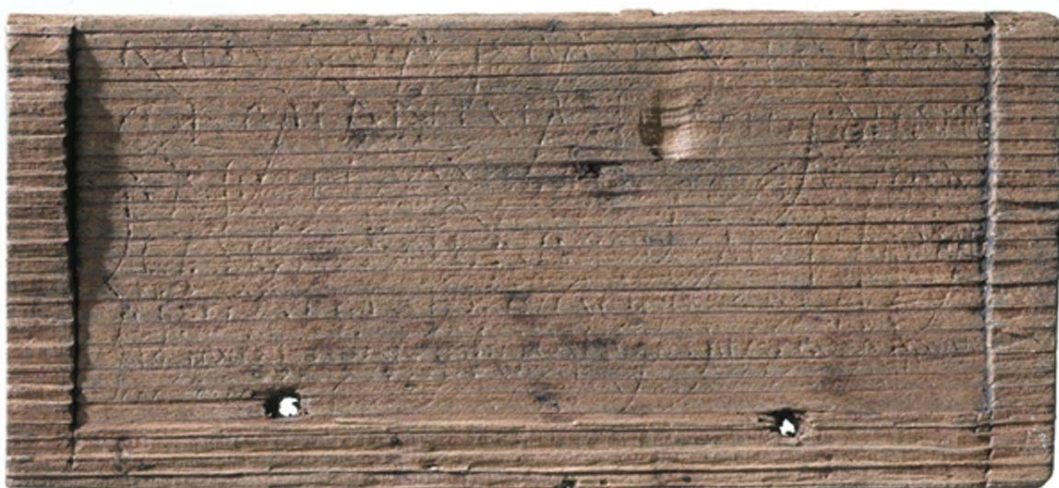
<https://www.theguardian.com › World › UK News › Roman Britain>

2. **The Cross Rail Excavations and Bloomberg Site, London.** This new underground rail route through the centre of London and the construction of a major office block for the Bloomberg corporation have yielded a treasure trove of finds for MOLA (Museum of London Archaeology), starting with the 19th century and going back to Roman times. Most exciting perhaps are the 405 Roman writing tablets recovered from the Bloomberg site, which predate those found at Vindolanda and contain the very first reference in Latin to Londinium, dated to January, AD 57. So far some 80 tablets have been deciphered. More detailed information can be found on this MOLA website:

<https://www.mola.org.uk/.../archaeological-research-britain's-oldest-hand-written-doc...>

This website on this topic is also worth visiting:

www.culture24.org.uk/history.../art555909-roman-tablets-london-invoice-wax-river



3. **Vindolanda.** This site never fails to deliver. There seems to be enough archaeology to keep the Birleys occupied for generations to come. In fact it may take longer to excavate the site completely than the time the Romans actually occupied Britain! In September 2017 a cavalry barracks was unearthed which has since produced thousands of artefacts from the second century. Among these were two cavalry swords in a remarkable state of preservation, one still with its wooden scabbard. For much more information on these exciting finds visit:



<https://www.theguardian.com> › World › UK News › Roman Britain

Meanwhile the secret (and not so secret) desire by many HDAS members to find a nice little Roman villa rustica in the area remains frustrated. But nil desperandum! Rome will provide.

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