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Life in the Roman World

KS2 Teaching Resources

Introduction

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Credits:
ULAS (above left),
Mike Codd/ Leicester City Council (above right),
Alan Sorrell, courtesy of the estate of Alan Sorrell (right).

How do we know about Roman Leicester?

Key Questions:

? What is an archaeologist?

? What questions can we ask an object to find out about how people lived in the past?

? Why is it important to use a range of evidence from objects and written sources to find out what life was like during different time periods?

? What is a civilisation? What is an empire?

In this chapter:
- Introduction of the local god Maglus, narrator of the story
- Introduction of the family who will feature in the stories
- Description of Julius Caesar's landing in Kent in 55-54 B.C.

See the *Online Resources* for links to the characters task Int.1. This is a key task and underlies the approach throughout these resources. Slides 3-5 provide structured questions which allow pupils to use objects from the past as evidence for the societies which created them. We would encourage pupils and teachers to return to them, and later slides on historical sources, throughout their study of past societies (not just Roman Britain but right up to the present!); they are repeated in the presentations accompanying later chapters.

What questions can we ask an object?

Credit: ULAS

Who?

What?

When?

Where?

Why?

How?

Credit: ULAS

What questions can we ask an object?

What is it?	What does it look and feel like?	How was it made?
• What is it called? • What is or was it used for? • Does it have more than one function?	• How big is it? • What is it made of? • What is its shape, smell, and sound? • What colour is it? • Is it complete? • Has it been altered, adapted, or mended? • Is it worn?	• Who made it? • How was it made? • Is it hand or machine made? • Does it have parts? • What does it tell you about the maker's technical skill?

What questions can we ask an object?

Does the design suit its purpose?	What can it tell us about the society in which it was made?	How was it valued?
• Were the best materials used? • How is it decorated? • What influenced its design and appearance?	• When was it made? • Where was it made? • Where was it used? • Where was it found? • Who made it? • Who used it? • Who owned it? • How does it compare to similar items from other cultures and time periods?	• What kind of value did it or does it have? (to the person who made it; to the person who used it) • How does the object reflect the person, community, nation or culture at the time it was made?

Int.2. Identify an object in the home of a grandparent or older neighbour which is no longer used today.

What question would you have to ask the owner about this object to work out how to use it?

Think about the objects from task **Int.1**. What do we know and what don't we know about how these objects were used?

Credit: Birdwes - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=46996919

Credit: Richard Avery - Own work, CC BY-SA 4.0, https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=35942532

Task 1 uses the framework of the questions about objects to show pupils what we *can* work out about people in the ancient world and the society they lived in. Task 2 reminds them what we *can't* work out, or at least need extra evidence to help us. The two tasks combine to introduce the idea that a <u>combination</u> of evidence, usually objects and written sources, provides valuable insight into ancient societies.

Slide 6 gives two possible examples of objects which would have been common in British households in the 20th century but may need explanation in the 21st; a telephone and a nutcracker. The picture of the nutcracker (right) includes a picture of a nut – would it be as easy to work out the function of the object without this in the picture? Archaeologists rarely have the luxury of instruction manuals or organic materials to help them to work out the function of objects they find, however, by asking questions such as those in slides 3-5, they can draw conclusions about ancient evidence, the people who used it, and the values of the society they lived in.

Int.3 Use the Portable Antiquities Scheme website to investigate an object found near your home or school.

Think about…:

?…who used it?
?…what did they use it for?
?…how did they use it?
?…where did they use it?
?…why did they use it?

Credit: ULAS

Create a character from the evidence of the object you have chosen and describe a day in their life.

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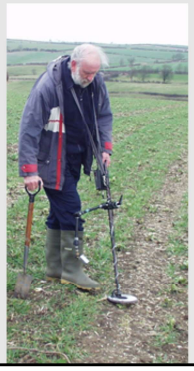
Task 3 allows pupils to create their own characters, using the framework questions (slides 3-5) and the example of task 1 as a guide. Instructions on accessing the **Portable Antiquities Scheme** and objects found close to pupils' houses or schools are explained in the *Online Resources* document.

The characters in task 1 (see *Online Resources* for link to the activity) are male and female, of different ages, status, and wealth; and some were slaves and not free. They would have experienced life in Roman Leicester in different ways. Throughout these activities, we emphasise the need to consider a range of perspectives, so that pupils critically evaluate ancient sources to reach conclusions about the daily lives of people (men, women and children) from every level of society and from diverse backgrounds.

Int.4 Find out about different archaeological techniques and present an introduction to them for the rest of your group or class. You could present them as a drama showing how archaeologists discover and investigate different kinds of evidence.

Match different pieces of evidence for life in Roman Leicestershire to the methods or processes of discovery and investigation.

What can each type of evidence tell us about everyday life in ancient Leicestershire?



Credits: ULAS (left and middle); Chris Royall (right)

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Explanations of different archaeological techniques can be found in the *Hoards, Hounds and Helmets (HHH*) book which accompanies this resource pack. See the *Online Resources* for links to additional information and resources.

Slide 14 shows different pieces of archaeological evidence which have been found in Leicestershire. Ask pupils to match different types of evidence to the methods/processes of discovery, investigation and interpretation. What can each piece of evidence tell us about everyday life in ancient Ratae? How have archaeologists pieced together different kinds of evidence to reconstruct the lives and experiences of the people who lived and worked in ancient Leicestershire?

Slides 9-13 explain the archaeological techniques used to discover/identify these pieces of evidence.

Pupils can first find out about the different techniques and present these to the rest of the class (or even the school, with some dramatisations as an assembly presentation) and then identify which pieces of evidence were identified and investigated using which techniques. Some pieces of evidence may combine techniques, for example objects might be excavated after a geophysical survey has taken place, and then analysed.

Geophysical Survey 1

Credit: ULAS

Geophysical survey techniques can be used to investigate the nature and extent of buried archaeological remains without damaging them. Techniques include **resistivity survey**, **magnetometry** (or magnetic surveying) and **Ground Penetrating Radar**. The two techniques used most frequently by archaeologists are resistivity and magnetometry.

In **resistivity survey** electrical current is introduced into the ground through a pair of electrodes. The ground's resistance to the flow of electricity is measured. Resistance is affected by the presence of features such as ditches or the remains of buildings.

Traces of human occupation can cause minute variations in the Earth's magnetic field. A **magnetometer** is an instrument that measures these variations. **Magnetometry** can help archaeologists to identify buried buildings, roads and ditches.

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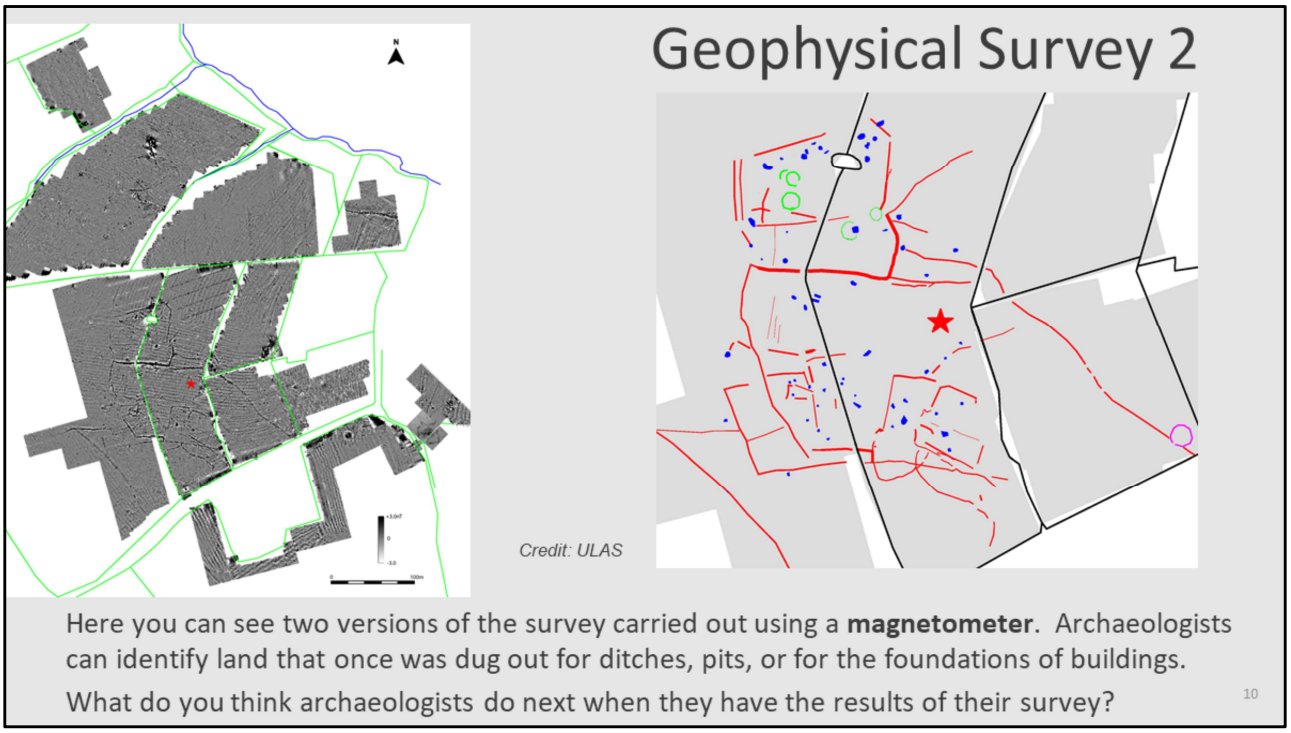
See pp. 10-11 of *Hoards, Hounds and Helmets* for further explanation. Survey techniques can be used to locate sites and to help archaeologists understand them within the wider landscape. They can help archaeologists to target the most appropriate places to investigate further and to gain an overall idea of the way a landscape was used in the past. See the following slides for the surveys carried out at Hallaton. The magnetometer pictured here is called a fluxgate gradiometer. A magnetometer is so sensitive to iron that people carrying out the survey have be careful to have no iron on them (e.g. zips, hooks, glasses frames, buttons). Magnetometry works better on some soil types than others.

Another type of survey is aerial reconnaissance (using a plane or drone). Earthworks are highlighted by their shadows. In dry summers, where sites are covered by a crop such as wheat, crop growth is stronger over pits or ditches where the soil contains more moisture. Marks formed in this way are called crop marks. Buried features such as walls retain less moisture and may appear as parch marks. The differences in crop growth only last a few days and it is usual to fly repeatedly over sites over a number of years to record them.

New technologies allow enhancement of existing photographs, and they can be combined with digital maps. New methods of reconnaissance include thermal and infra-red sensing and LiDAR which uses a pulsed laser to measure distances to the Earth. Drones can be used for low-level recording. Aerial images are best interpreted

in combination with other forms of evidence, including information from geophysical surveys.



See pp. 10-11 of *Hoards, Hounds and Helmets* for further explanation of the surveys, including what each colour indicates. The right-hand image is an interpretation of the main archaeological features (in red, green, blue, and magenta) found on the original survey on the left in darker lines. The red star was where the Hallaton coin hoards were found. Following the survey, archaeologists decided which features would be excavated.

Field-walking

Field walking is what you might expect – walking over fields! Archaeologists walk across fields in an organised way (for example, dividing the field into a grid), picking up objects that they find there, such as pottery, animal bones, and metal objects (if they're lucky enough to find any). The location of objects is carefully recorded.

When several objects are found in the same area, this may indicate that a settlement once existed in the field.

Archaeologists analyse the evidence from field walking using some of the questions you have used already to draw conclusions about the people who once lived in the landscape. They might decide to use other methods, such as **geophysical survey** or **excavation**, to find out more.

Credit: ULAS

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See pages 6-7 in *HHH* for further details about field walking. As the description of the discovery of the finds from Hallaton shows, archaeologists combine the evidence from different techniques to arrive at their conclusions about life in the ancient world. Just like new historical accounts, those conclusions might change in the future when someone reconsiders the evidence in light of new knowledge or the development of new techniques of analysis.

As *HHH* makes clear, the first priority for field walkers is to get permission from the landowner before starting their investigations.

Metal-detecting

Field walkers sometimes use **metal detectors**. Metal detectors can locate metal objects which lie beneath the surface of the soil, like the coins found at Hallaton. This is another way to work out where geophysical survey or excavation might be useful.

You may have investigated objects found using metal detectors in task 3 when you used the **Portable Antiquities Scheme** website. This is where new finds are reported for archaeologists and the public to study.

Credits: ULAS (top left); Chris Royall (top right and bottom left)

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See *HHH* p. 8, 12-13 and 15 for further details on the use of metal detectors in archaeology, including details of what to do if you're lucky enough to find something! Many finds from this technique are recorded on the Portable Antiquities Scheme website (see the *Online Resources* for the address and guidance on using the site) – see Int. 3 for a task investigating objects found close to where pupils live or go to school.

The bottom left image shows just some of the thousands of coins found at Hallaton after they were cleaned. Compare the examples in the picture above, shown during the process of excavation. See p. 12 of *HHH* for Ken's 'Treasure Map' of coins and for an explanation of the difficulties archaeologists can face when they study the coins.

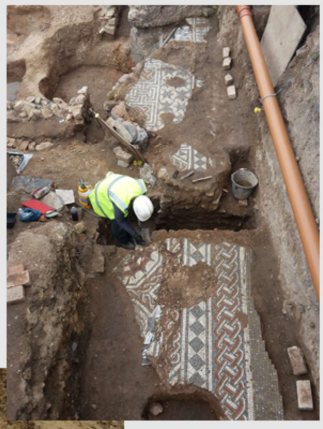
Archaeologists carry out **excavations** to obtain information about human activities at a particular place in the past and to examine changes in human activity over time

Archaeology is a **destructive process** and archaeologists must carefully consider why, how and what to dig. Excavations are recorded in detail with written **notes**, drawn **plans**, **sections** and **photographs**.

Archaeologists interpret the **layers and deposits** produced by natural processes and human activity over time. They examine changes in the colour, texture and content of the soil. Every layer and feature on a site is given a unique **context number** and **artefacts** (objects made by humans) and **ecofacts** (organic materials) found within a context are labelled with this number.

The excavations pictured here are from the centre of Leicester (top right) and near the village of **Hallaton** (bottom left) – what can they tell us about each site?

Excavation



Credits: ULAS

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See *HHH* 12-15 for further details on excavation. The *Online Resources* include links to details of current and recent excavations by ULAS.

Pupils who are keen to find out more can join the Young Archaeologists Club (YAC) in their local area.

In the UK, any development of land has to take place with an archaeologist monitoring the site for archaeological evidence. Many discoveries in Roman Leicester were made in advance of development and construction, such as the discoveries of the Vine Street courtyard house as part of the High Cross shopping centre development and the mosaic shown on the back of *LitRW* at the Stibbe Factory site.

Analysing evidence

Human **osteoarchaeology** is the scientific study of human skeletons excavated from archaeological sites. It can tell us about the health, lifestyle and diet of people in the past.

Techniques used by human osteoarchaeologists include detailed examination of the skeleton, including the **measurement** of bones and teeth and **chemical and physical analyses**.

Credit: https://le.ac.uk/richard-iii/identification/osteology/analysing-the-skeleton

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See *HHH* pp. 46-9 for further details of the evidence from the different bones found at Hallaton.

Human skeletal remains are sometimes found on archaeological sites; these can range from entire burial grounds or cemeteries containing thousands of graves (interments), to sites with single burials or small groups of remains.

Human remains can provide us with a wealth of information, including age, gender, diet, disease, lifestyle, approximate age at death. The study of genetics may be able to shed light on genetic relationships and on the movement of people in the past. The treatment of human remains involves legal and ethical considerations. A human **osteologist** is an important member of any fieldwork project involving human remains.

The osteologist here is Dr Jo Appleby (University of Leicester) who worked on the skeleton of Richard III.

Archaeologists also study animal remains (**archaeozoology**).

Food remains

The fleshy part of food usually rots away and all that remains are bones, seeds and shells.

Seeds can be preserved if they are burnt (e.g. spilt during cooking), appear in poo (mineralised), or in very wet soil.

Bones and **shells** (e.g. oysters) also survive, except for when the soil is very acidic.

As the remains can be very small, we might not see them when we are digging. So, we have to take soil samples to find them…what do you think we do to the samples to find out more?

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Analysis of food and plant remains provides important evidence for archaeologists' understanding of the physical environment and the everyday diets of people in the past (archaeobotany). See chapter 4 for an exercise investigating foodways in ancient Leicester. These discoveries allow archaeologists to draw conclusions about topics such as trade in the ancient world, and how this changed before, during, and after the Roman Empire. It can also shed light on life in the Roman army – if an army marches on its stomach, how do you ensure a full tummy in enemy territory?

Flotation

In the lab, soil is put into a **mesh** that sits in a tank of water. With a bit of stirring, the soil passes through the small holes of the mesh and the finds are left - it is like a big sieve!

Some seeds are so light that they float and run down the spout, where they collect in a little sieve. This method is called **flotation**. When dry, the seeds are looked at under a **microscope** to identify different **varieties** of seeds.

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The identification of different plants from the ancient world allows archaeologists to draw up a picture of the landscape in which people lived before, during, and after the Roman Empire, and how this changed. It also provides insights into diet, trade and occupations from the period, as archaeologists can identify whether materials were available locally or imported from elsewhere, in turn suggesting that the skills and experience of working with imported materials might have had to be brought in from further afield too.

The survival and identification of plant remains depends on many factors, including the soils at a site, the conditions in which they were preserved, and the skills and expertise of the archaeologist (archaeobotanist).

Match the pieces of evidence shown in this slide to the archaeological methods and techniques of discovery and investigation described in the previous slides. Pupils could play snap with printed out cards of the pictures on this slide and the information on slides 9-16.

Clockwise from top left:
Excavation of the Hallaton helmet; **geophysical survey** of the late Iron Age/ early Roman 1° century CE settlement at Hallaton; **excavation** and **osteological analysis** of pig bones from the feasting area at Hallaton; **field walking** or **excavation** of pottery, whose shapes, materials and decoration can tell us about trade and foodways in the ancient world; **excavation** and **seed analysis** of food remains from the Roman delicatessen in Castle Street, Leicester; Iron Age coins from Hallaton found using **metal detectors.**

Remember that more than one technique may be used, e.g. the Hallaton pig bones were excavated after identification during field walking and then underwent osteological analysis.

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