

## Romans on the Don Classroom Exercise 3

### Jewellery and Baking Bread at Stainton

Three archaeological projects were carried out at Holme Hall near Stainton between 1994 and 2005. The first was fieldwalking which identified an area 60 metres by 80 metres in a field where a large amount of Romano-British pottery was found. This led to geophysical survey and excavation of the area.

The site was an Iron Age and Romano-British settlement where bread was baked in kilns during the Roman period.

Many features were discovered including a ditched enclosure within which were pits, gullies and postholes, and a hearth. Also inside the enclosure was a cobbled area containing burnt river cobbles that may have been heated in a fire for use in cooking, either to roast meat on or to boil water in pots. The cobbles were thrown aside after use.

Outside the enclosure were field boundary ditches, pits, the bases of 3 bread ovens, and a waste midden. The ovens showed that the family who lived in the farm baked their own bread. Wood was placed inside and set a light. When the flames had died down to embers, bread was placed inside the kiln on racks to bake. When ready the racks could be taken out without destroying the roof of the oven.

Over 1400 fragments of animal bone were discovered on the site, including cattle, sheep and goat bones.

Over 5300 sherds of Roman-British pottery were found, most of it dating from the 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> centuries AD. The pottery is mainly from jars and a slight increase in table wares over time may show the adoption of Roman table manners in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

Other artefacts from the site included fragments of quern stones, an enamelled copper alloy stud, a copper alloy brooch depicting a mythical animal like a dragon, 2 writing styli, 54 nails, and 3 coins.

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### Exercise3a. Baking Bread at Stainton

Show the pupils the drawing of the farmstead at Stainton ([Exercise 3 Picture 1.jpg](#)).

**Ask them what they think the people are doing?**

**What can they spot in the picture?**

The drawing shows the family putting warm bread in a basket. They have just taken the bread from the oven which is the domed structure behind the man and woman. They will eat some of the bread and might sell some of it at market. Behind the oven is the large earthen bank that encloses their house. The house is the rectangular building inside the enclosure which has a thatch roof and wooden walls. There is a pile of logs in front of the bank which is the fuel for the oven. The family have had to cut these logs from a nearby woodland. In the distance are two more houses of another farm.

**Ask the pupils to compare the past and present. Where do they get bread and what does it look like?**

**What sort of cooker do they have? What fuel does it use?**

Show the pupils the picture of a kiln ([Exercise 3 Picture 2.jpg](#)).

**Ask them what they think it is and what it was used for?**

It is the stone-lined base of a bread oven. This is all that the archaeologists found surviving of the bread oven shown in Exercise 3 Picture 1.

### Exercise 3b. Jewellery at Stainton

Show the pupils the picture of the brooch ([Exercise 3 Picture 3.jpg](#)).

**Ask them what they think it is, what it was used for and what it looks like? Is it an animal of some sort?**

This is a brooch used to tie a cloak around the neck of the wearer and is in the form of a dragon.

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Exercise 3 Picture 1. Reconstruction of the Romano-British farmstead at Stainton. The rectangular house is within an enclosed compound. The farming family are baking bread in a kiln outside the enclosure.

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Exercise 3 Picture 2. Archaeologists standing next to a partly excavated bread oven at Stainton. The base of the kiln was lined with stones and it would have had a clay roof.

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Exercise 3 Picture 3. The “Dragonesque” brooch from Stainton. It is made of a copper alloy metal with an enamelled decoration and would have been used to fasten a cloak. It may have been worn by a man or a woman.