

Roman Castleford

Roman Castleford is an extremely important archaeological site. Between the years 1974 and 2005 archaeologists have excavated over 30 trenches in Castleford.

The most well-known find is the Roman fort of Lagentium. But the archaeologists also found evidence of the civilian settlement and discovered what happened at the site when the Roman army left.

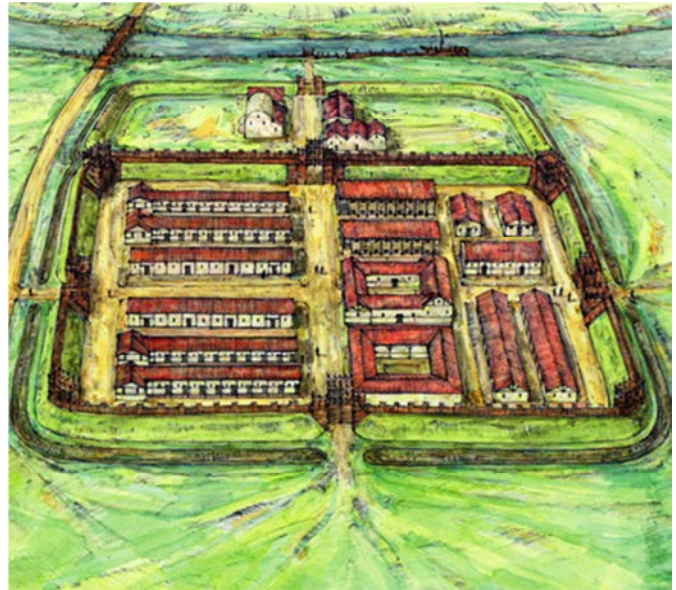
Tens of thousands of objects were found. These finds tell the story of the people of Roman Castleford.

Castleford is not just another Roman site. Some of the finds are unique. The archaeologists found evidence of crafts that have not been found elsewhere in Britain.

Do you want to know more?

The major excavations carried out in Castleford are fully published by the West Yorkshire Archaeology Service in 'Roman Castleford: Excavations 1974-85', Vols 1-3, 1998-2001. Ordering details are on their website (see 'Related Links')

The West Yorkshire Archaeology Advisory Service holds information on sites in Castleford in the Historic Environment Record and also has information on their website about the Romans in West Yorkshire (see 'Related Links').



The Site

Where was Roman Castleford?

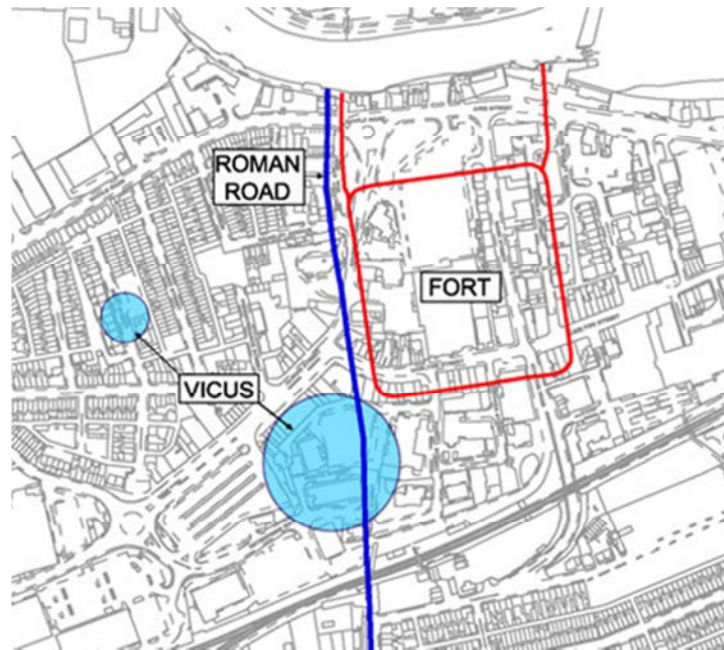
Beneath our feet

Modern Castleford has been built over the top of Roman Castleford so there are no Roman buildings to see. However, the line of the Roman road can still be seen on the map. The Roman road entered Castleford from the south underneath Beancroft Road. It then ran under Welbeck Street and passed east of All Saints' Church to cross the river by a ford.

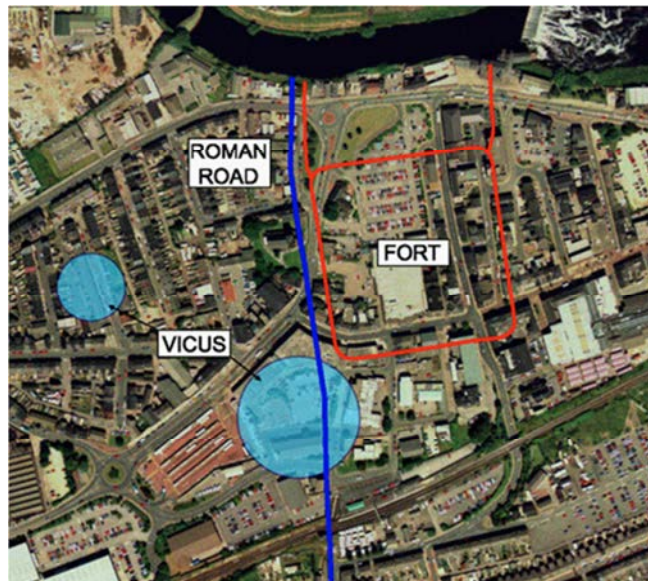
The Romans built a fort to control the river crossing. The fort was in an area now defined by Church Street, Carlton Street, Bradley Street and the river.

Archaeologists have also excavated part of the civilian settlement (the Romans called this a vicus). The main vicus buildings fronted the Roman road in the area of modern Welbeck Street.

1. Map showing the position of the fort and vicus underneath modern Castleford.



2. Aerial photograph showing the position of the fort and vicus underneath modern Castleford.



Have the archaeologists found all of Roman Castleford?

No. The archaeologists have only been able to dig in areas where new buildings or roads are planned. Usually they only have time or money to dig a part of each site. So there may be more of Roman Castleford in areas where there has been no new building recently.

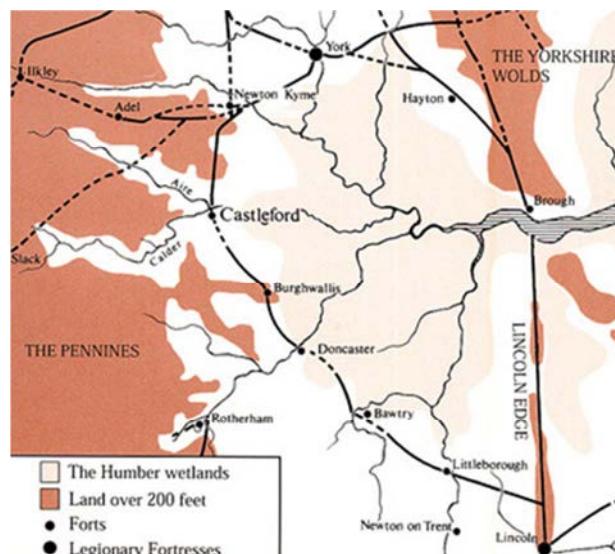
3. The areas in red on this map show where archaeologists have been able to excavate in the centre of modern Castleford.



Early Discoveries

On the Roman road network

People have known for a very long time that Castleford was a Roman place on one of the main Roman roads in Britain. Lists of places along the roads of the Roman Empire were written down in the 3rd and 4th centuries AD. These were copied later and preserved in medieval documents.



1. Castleford in relation to the main Roman roads. The Antonine Itinerary mentioned Castleford twice between Doncaster (Danum) and York (Eboracum). It was called Legeolium on the route from London to Carlisle, and Lagecium on the route from York to London. The later Ravenna Cosmography called it Lagentium.

16th century - John Leland and William Camden

A visit by John Leland in c. 1534

People in England first began to be interested in visiting and describing historic places in the 1500s. John Leland was the first of these antiquarians to visit Castleford and make a record of what he saw. In Castleford he saw foundations that were probably part of the Roman fort near the church, but he didn't recognise them. Instead he thought they must be much more recent.

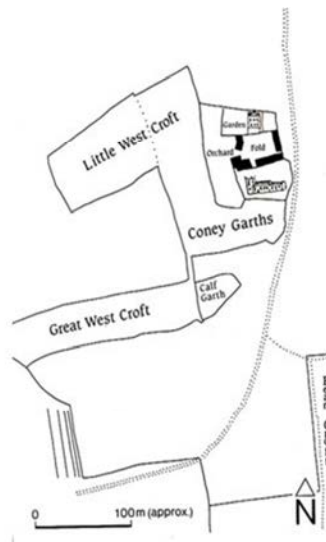
'... From Pontefract to Castelleford Village 2.Miles, most by enclosid Ground. One shoid me there a Garth by the Chirch Yard, where many straung thingges of Foundations hath be found: and he sayid that ther had beene a Castelle, but it was rather sum Manor Place ...'

William Camden identifies Castleford's Roman origins c.1582

William Camden, like Leland before him, travelled extensively around England. He produced a book Britannia describing the places he saw. He first published it in 1586, but it went on being added to and revised over many editions after his death.

He knew the Latin sources and was the first person to identify Castleford as a place in the Roman route lists. He also recorded that large numbers of Roman coins were found near the church. This confirmed Castleford's Roman origins:

' ... the older name of this place is that in Antonius, where tis' called Legeolium and Lagetium which among other remarkable and express remains of antiquity, is confirmed by those great number of coins ... dug up here in Beanfield, a place near the Church ...'



1. There are no maps of Castleford as early as the visits of Leland and Camden to help locate what they saw. This extract from the 1772 glebe map is the earliest to show the area where Leland and Camden described archaeological remains and finds.

18th century - William Stukeley and Thomas Whitaker

A visit by Stukeley 1725

In the 1700s many more people took an interest in visiting sites and publishing what they saw. William Stukeley visited Castleford in late 1725. He described what he saw in more detail than Leland and Camden:

‘ ... The place where the Roman ford was, is a little above the cascade: the stones are in great part left, but the mill-dam lays it too deep under water. Hence the paved road goes up the bank to the east side of the church, and forward through the fields, where innumerable coins are ploughed up: One part is called Stone Acre. A man told us he had formerly ploughed up a dozen Roman coins in a day: urns are often found: there are stone pavements, foundations etc. South of the church is a pasture, called Castle-garth: here were buildings of the city: but the Roman castrum was where the church now stands, built probably out of its ruins ... ‘

A visit in 1780

There was still plenty to see in 1780. When Thomas Whitaker first visited Castleford he could see what Stukeley had described and he acquired some Roman finds for himself:

‘ ... When I was there ... besides a pretty intaglia on a cornelian, I procured a scarce denarius of Caracalla, reverse a lion. The principal scene of these discoveries lies in the orchards and enclosures south of the church, which was probably the ground on which the city stood. The church itself unquestionably stands within the Roman castrum ... ‘



A 1775 map is more like a Roman fort than a medieval castle. Jefferys was usually accurate in his recording of visible archaeological sites.

c.1750 - Mosaic pavement found

In about 1750 a visiting antiquarian T. Wilson recorded in a letter that he had seen ‘... *several fragments of a fine tessellated pavement (mosaic) at Castleford, which had been dug up in a garden adjoining to the Bean-field ...*’

This was the field called Bean Croft Field, where many other buildings and finds had been recorded. Unfortunately the mosaic was not drawn or kept.

Why have no mosaics been found since?

This is the only record of a mosaic being found in the centre of Castleford. Why? The large scale excavations carried out on from 1974-1985 were concentrated in the fort and the trading settlement next to it. Neither of these would have been likely to have mosaic floors.

Mosaics were usually laid at a later date in the homes of wealthy Romanised people. Individual finds from Castleford show that there was a later Romano-British settlement at Castleford but no buildings have yet been found by archaeologists.

So there may be other mosaics waiting to be discovered in Castleford!

1775 - A mystery castle

A square feature called Castle Hill is marked just south of Castleford, on the map of Yorkshire published in 1775 by Thomas Jefferys. Could this also be something Roman? It is in the area of Bean Croft Field where Camden described frequent coin finds and Stukeley saw stone pavements and foundations.



1. A 1775 map is more like a Roman fort than a medieval castle. Jefferys was usually accurate in his recording of visible archaeological sites.

In the 19th century local historian Samuel Johnson heard of something similar that had been seen in about 1820 in the Bean Croft. According to local tradition, it was the site of a castle, which could mean a Roman fort. However, the remains seen in 1820 looked more like a moat.

Samuel Johnson made a thorough search of the Bean Croft Field in about 1860, but found no evidence either for a moated site or a castle.

1861 - Discovery of Roman milestone reported

In 1861 a local historian Samuel Johnson published his book **History of Castleford: cuttings from the Castleford Magazine**. He had been energetically collecting reports of finds from Castleford's Roman past. Among the many sightings he reported were:

- The paving of the Roman ford across the river was seen when the water level was low. The ford was about 12 feet wide and paved with stones.
- A stone pavement, possibly the Roman road, was found 11 feet down during drain-laying in the road outside the Mexborough Arms.
- A quern (for grinding corn) was found at the west end of Carlton Street.
- A milestone was found at Half Acres. It was dedicated to the Emperor Florian in AD 276. This is now in the Yorkshire Museum.

1880 - Unexpected discovery during drain-laying

In about 1880 a milestone was found near the south end of Beancroft Road at the junction with Beancroft Street. It was cylindrical in shape and had two inscriptions on it. The first was to the Emperor Trajan Decius and dates to AD 250-251. Soon after the stone was turned upside down and a new inscription was added to Gallus and Volusian. It can be dated to AD 251-253. It gave the distance to York as 22 miles.

This milestone was bought by Professor Haverfield who later presented it to Leeds Museum.



1. This is one of three milestones now known from the Roman road near Castleford.

1900 - Evidence for a cemetery in Beancroft Road

In 1904 local historian Lorenzo Padgett reported the discovery of two cremation urns on Beancroft Road, one of them containing burnt human bones. One was found when digging the foundations of a new house at the corner of Beancroft Road and Smawthorne Lane, and the other was found when digging the foundations of a shop on the opposite corner.

The Romans did not allow burials within a town. Instead they were placed outside settlements, often along the roads into town. So these urns show that the vicus (settlement) did not extend as far south as Smawthorne Lane.

Finds from the town centre

At about the same time, pieces of Samian pottery were being found and recognised as Roman in the town centre. Some fragments from about 1900 were saved and much later presented to the museum collection in Castleford Library.



1. Pottery vessel called a tazza from Beancroft Road. These may have been used to burn incense.



2. Samian pottery found underneath an old house in Albion Street in December 1900.

1920s - Finds from Carlton Street

In 1922 two pieces of Roman roof tile were found in Carlton Street. The two fragments of tile were stamped *C IIII G*, a shortened version of the name for a Roman army unit, the Fourth Cohort of Gauls. This army unit must have been stationed at Castleford.

At the time people thought the fort lay around the parish church, where the early writers thought they saw the remains of the fort. But we now know that the second fort was to the east of the Roman road, and these tiles were found within it.

Not long after, two Roman lamps were found in Albion Street in 1930. These early finds were kept and much later presented to the museum collection at Castleford Library.



1. *C IIII G* which is shorthand for the Fourth Cohort of Gauls. This unit was stationed at Castleford to guard the road and the river crossing.

1960s - Redevelopment in Albion Street/Carlton Street

Substantial redevelopment started in 1963 and included a new bus station and the bowling alley, Crystal Bowl. Suddenly Roman finds were being found in large numbers, and the importance of Castleford's Roman past began to be recognised. For the first time professional archaeologists were involved in Castleford. Staff from the Royal Commission on Historical Monuments office at York watched the work, but were not able to do detailed recording. Library staff did sterling work rescuing objects from the builders' spoil heaps.

Excavation at Welbeck Street

The discovery of finds in 1968 at Welbeck Street, which overlay the Roman road, led to an excavation by the Castleford and District Historical Society, which continued until 1971. It found finds ranging in date from the 1st to 4th centuries AD. Nearby amateur archaeologist Ron Jeffries was digging by the railway station in 1969-70. The finds were numerous,

including coarse pottery, mortaria with stamps, glass fragments and Samian pottery.



1. A complete Castor ware beaker decorated with white patterns found in Albion Street in 1965.



2. The excavations carried out by the Castleford and District Historical Society were done entirely by volunteers.

Early 1970s - Finds at 94 Carlton Street

In 1970-71 amateur archaeologist Ron Jeffries excavated behind 94 Carlton Street in an area just within the second fort. The finds included coarsewares, Samian pottery, a complete mortarium and a possible fragment of Roman scale armour, lorica squamata.



1. Amateur archaeologist Ron Jeffries was responsible for making many finds of Roman material around Castleford.

Further investigations at Welbeck Street

In the early 1970s lecturer Harold Bowes did further work near the excavation done by the Castleford and District Historical Society. This was to be the site for the British Legion Club. He found parallel ditches crossing the site, filled with burnt wattle and daub from timber buildings, as well as very large quantities of split animal bone.

In 1974 he began excavations with volunteers on the other side of Welbeck Street. This also produced extensive finds and the West Yorkshire Archaeology Unit continued the work as the first full time excavation in Castleford. This was the beginning of a long series of excavations that ran almost continually from 1974 to 1985. They were to reveal in detail two forts as well as a trading settlement built outside the fort to supply goods and services to the garrison.

Before the Romans

What was here before the Romans?

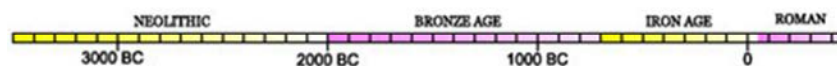
People have known for a very long time that Romans lived in Castleford from the thousands of pieces of Roman pottery, coins and other Roman objects found in the town. But there were people living in the Castleford area thousands of years before the Romans came to Yorkshire. Archaeologists digging on Roman sites in the town have found objects from the earlier Neolithic and Bronze Age periods. There are also pre-Roman sites known in the area around Castleford.

Why is there less evidence for prehistoric Castleford?

During prehistory many objects were made from wood, leather and bone. Archaeologists rarely find these 'organic' materials on sites because they tend to decay more quickly than the 'inorganic' Roman pottery and metal finds.

What other evidence is there?

Botanical (plant) evidence shows that people may have lived in the Castleford area as early as 8500 BC when most of the area was woodland. By about 4000 BC they were beginning to clear woodland for agriculture. By the time the Romans arrived, the area around Castleford was mainly open land. It was already being intensively farmed.



The Neolithic and the Bronze Age

Evidence of people living in Castleford

The archaeologists found Neolithic pottery and Neolithic to Bronze Age flints during the Castleford excavations. They didn't find any evidence for the homes or buildings of these early people. They were probably quite flimsy and may have been destroyed by later development – from the Romans to the modern day.



1. These fragments of pottery date to about 3000 BC, during the Neolithic period. Pottery this early is a very rare find in West Yorkshire. People may have made containers from leather and bark instead of pottery.



2. Flint was used before metal was available, to make knives, scrapers and arrowheads.

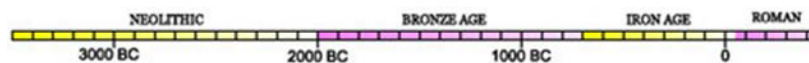
Evidence of people living in the area

Burials and monuments of the same date as the Castleford pottery and flint have been found near Ferrybridge power station. In the Neolithic a henge monument (a large circular earthwork) was built there. Archaeologists think this was a religious monument, where people held meetings and ceremonies.

People went on using the henge monument for a long time. During the Bronze Age several round barrows containing burials were built close to the henge. The archaeologists found burials with grave goods such as flint daggers and arrowheads.



3. A reconstruction of people gathering at the Ferrybridge henge monument in the Bronze Age. By this date Bronze Age barrows have been added around the original henge monument.



The Iron Age and the Brigantes

Who lived around Castleford?

In the Iron Age the Castleford area lay within the territory of a powerful group of British tribes called the Brigantes. They controlled almost the whole of the north of England.

Evidence for people living in the area

Botanical (plant) evidence shows that there was well-established and well-organised farming in the Castleford area during the Iron Age. Aerial photography shows that people lived in small farms scattered around the landscape. Some of these farms close to Castleford have been excavated at Whitwood, Ferrybridge and Ledston.



1. By the Iron Age people were living close to the henge monument at Ferrybridge, but they were still using and respecting the ceremonial monuments. Archaeologists found fields and farms with roundhouses. There was evidence for crop processing and metal-working.



2. This reconstruction shows an Iron Age farm at North Elmsall. Archaeologists found a farmyard with a large roundhouse in the centre. There were three smaller roundhouses outside the yard used as homes.

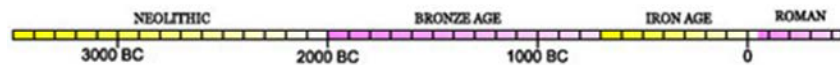
Burial of an important man

A rare burial of an Iron Age man was found at Ferry Fryston near Ferrybridge during improvements to the A1(M) in 2003. He was buried in about 200 BC in a complete chariot. Archaeologists think that burial in a chariot was reserved for people of very high status in the

Iron Age. Chariot burials are usually only found in East Yorkshire, so this man may not have been local.



3. All the wooden and leather parts of the chariot had rotted away, but archaeologists got enough information from the remains in the grave to make this replica.



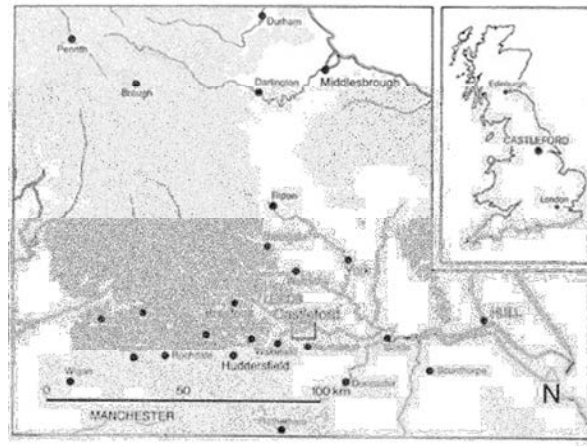
The arrival of the Romans in Castleford

The Roman Conquest in southern Britain

The Romans conquered southern Britain in AD 43, but they did not immediately try to invade the north of Britain. It took some time to establish control of the south-east. They suffered a disaster in AD 60 when Boudicca, Queen of the Iceni tribe, led a revolt against them.

The Romans move into northern Britain

The Queen of the Brigantes, Cartimandua, at first had a policy of becoming an ally of the Romans, rather than opposing them. In the end her own people, led by her ex-husband, revolted against her. This became the excuse for the Romans to move in and take control. Petillius Cerialis, Roman governor of Britain, conquered almost the whole of the north of England from AD 71-4.



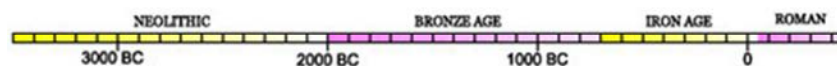
1. The fort at Castleford was an important staging post for the conquest of the north of England. The road from Doncaster through Castleford to York was one of two main roads to the north built by the Romans.



2. ***C IIII G*** which is shorthand for the Fourth Cohort of Gauls. This unit was stationed at Castleford to guard the road and the river crossing.

What did the Romans call Castleford?

The earliest historic documents indicate that the Roman name for Castleford was either Legeolium or Lagecium. However, Roman Castleford is more often referred to as Lagentium – a name which was first recorded some 300 years after the Romans left Britain. Lagentium is thought to mean ‘Place of the Swordsmen’.



Excavations - the fort

Where was Lagentium?

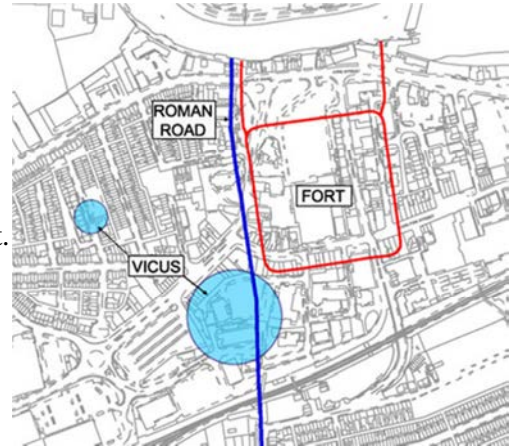
Castleford was known to be the site of a Roman fort called Lagentium, but only archaeological excavations could prove for certain where it was.

Archaeologists have clearly identified not just a Roman fort, but also a vicus (or civilian settlement) outside the fort.

The fort

The fort was next to the main Roman road, close to the river crossing. The Roman army needed to transport troops and supplies safely along the road.

Forts were built at strategic points along the road so the army could keep the route safe from enemies.



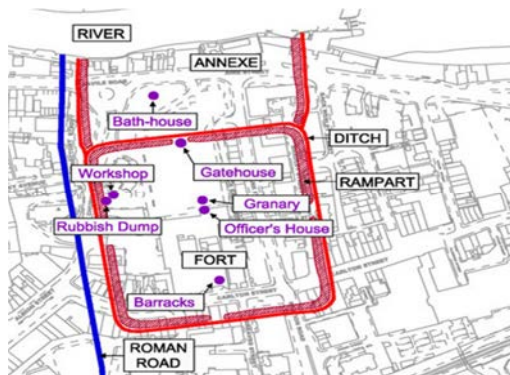
When was it built and what did it look like?

When was the fort built?

The archaeologists found that there had been two different forts built at Castleford. The first fort was built in about AD 71. This was just about the time that the Romans began their conquest of the north of England. The Roman army stayed for about 15 years and then left in about AD 86. After a short break the army built a second fort in AD 86. This fort was occupied for about 14 years until the garrison left again in about AD 100.

What did the fort look like?

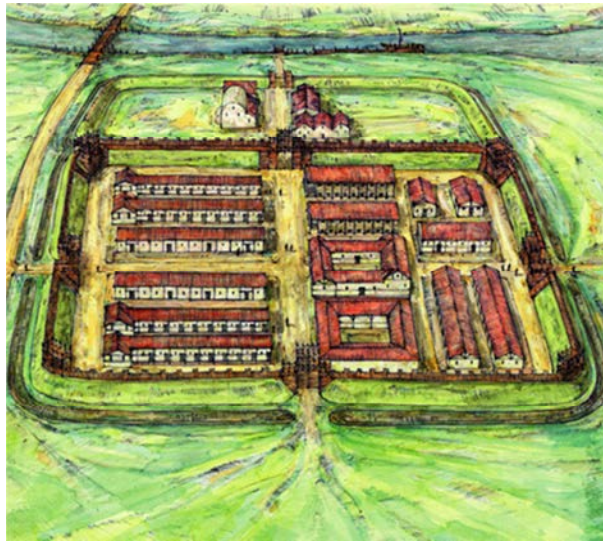
The excavations did not reveal much evidence of the first fort but the plan of the second fort was much clearer. The Romans usually built their forts with similar plans, so the archaeologists had an idea of what to look for. The main buildings inside the fort should be barracks, offices, granaries, stables and workshops.



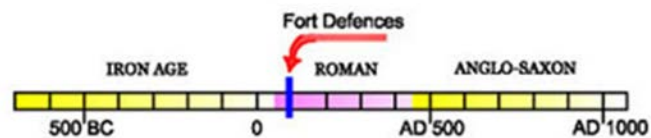
1. Bath house, a workshop and a rubbish dump.

The fort annexe

Forts also often had extra space attached to the fort, which was also protected by a rampart. The annexe could be used for the parade ground and a safe camp-site for other army units travelling along the road.



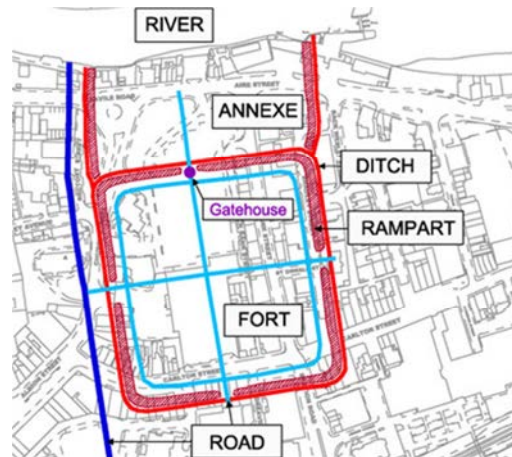
2. A reconstruction of the fort at Castleford



How was the fort defended?

The fort defences

The main defence was the rampart (called the vallum). The rampart was 6m wide at the base and 5m high. Sentries would patrol a walkway along the top of the ramparts. Outside the rampart a deep v-shaped ditch provided another layer of defence against attack.



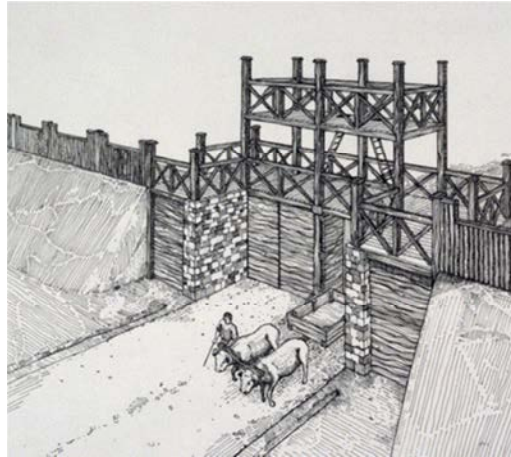
1. Walls of turf with soil filling between. Roads crossed the fort between the gateways and ran behind the rampart.

Gateways into the fort

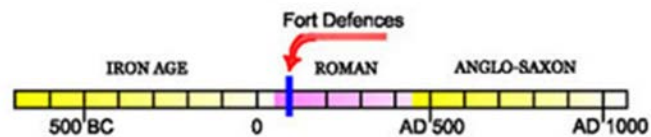
The army controlled access to the fort through gateways in each side of the fort. Only one gateway of the four gateways into the fort was found and excavated at Castleford. This was the gateway that led from the fort into the annexe.



2. The only evidence for the gateway was the large pits, or postholes in which the huge timber uprights of the structure stood. The timbers themselves had long since decayed.



3. This reconstruction shows what the gateway and ramparts might have looked like. It is based on the pattern of postholes for the timber uprights, as well as evidence from other sites. Two tall guard towers stood against the rampart, on either side of the gate.



The barracks

Barracks were the sleeping quarters for the Roman army. The Romans had a standard shape for barracks. They were long, narrow buildings divided into small rooms.

How many barrack blocks were found at Castleford?

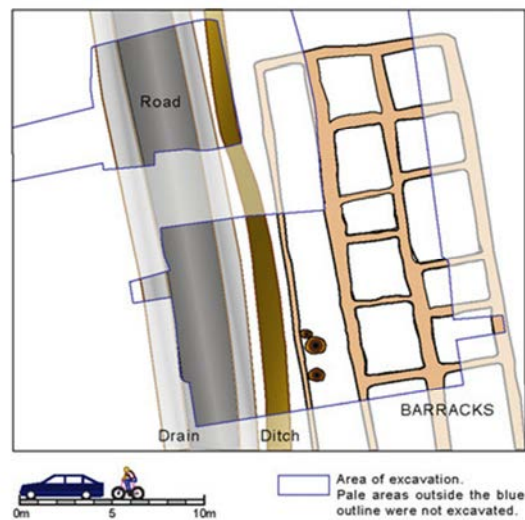
The archaeologists found only two barrack blocks, but large areas of the fort were not excavated. Few finds were recovered. The archaeologists used the layout of the buildings to interpret them as barrack blocks.



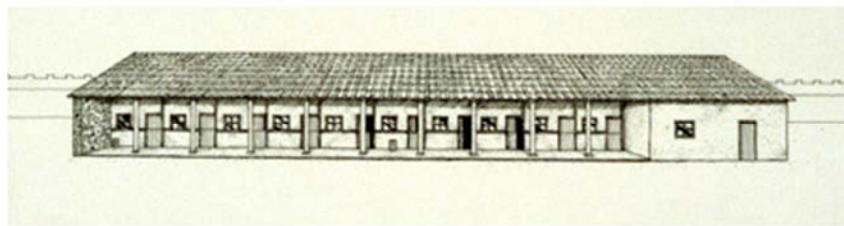
1. The archaeologists only found the foundation trenches in which the walls of this barrack block originally stood. Compare this photo to the plan the archaeologists drew (below) to work out which rooms you are looking at.

How many men slept in each barrack block?

Each barrack block was arranged in pairs of rooms called contubernia. Eight men shared each set of rooms. They slept in one room and kept their equipment in the other. The archaeologists were not able to excavate the whole building, but it is known from other sites that there were ten contubernia.



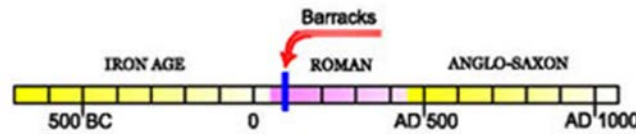
2. The centurion's room was not found within the excavated area, but it would have been at the end of the block (the bottom of the plan).



3. This reconstruction is based on the excavation plan of the barrack block, viewed from the road. Each of the contubernia (rooms) had its own entrance from the veranda. The centurion's room was at the end of the block.

How many barrack blocks were needed at Castleford?

The Castleford fort was home to an auxiliary unit, made up mainly of infantry soldiers but with some cavalry as well, a total of about 600 men. This unit was called a *cohortus quingenaria equitata*. Typically this size of army unit would need eight barrack blocks.



The Commanding Officer's house

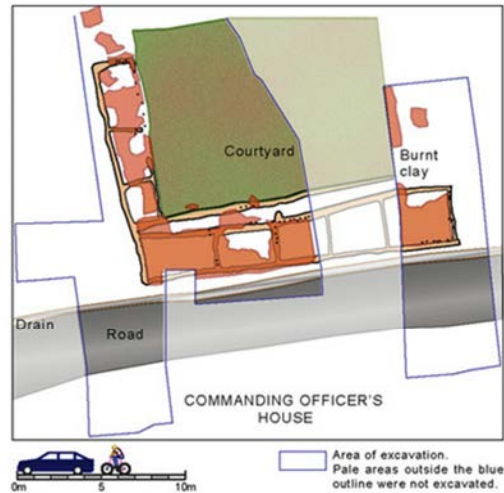
It wasn't easy for archaeologists to identify all the buildings. They found a large timber building with a courtyard in the middle of the fort. Was this the commanding officer's house (the *praetorium*) or the army headquarters (the *principia*)? Both were usually near the centre of the fort and both were large with small rooms arranged around a central courtyard.

Evidence from the building

The archaeologists found three sides of a timber building with a central courtyard. The rooms had clay floors. When the army left they did not expect to return, so they set fire to this building so that no-one else could use it. The heat of the fire turned the clay floors red.



1. The archaeologists found the foundation trenches in which timber walls had originally stood. This row of rooms was next to the road. Compare this photo with the plan that the archaeologists drew of this building (below).



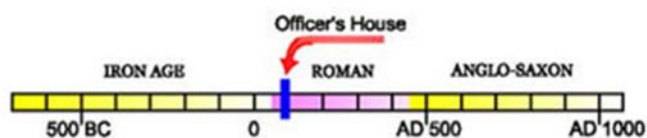
2. The house is not complete because some rooms were destroyed by later buildings. The red clay floors are evidence of the fire that destroyed the building. The pattern of clay helps to complete the plan of the rooms.

Evidence from the finds

The archaeologists found a large quantity of finds in this building. They found cavalry equipment, an iron spearhead, glass bottles, a metal bowl, coins, pottery, a knife handle, a grinding stone for grain (a quernstone) and a sharpening stone for blades (a whetstone). As these are a mixture of military and household finds, it is likely that army officers lived here.



3. **SACRA** has been scratched on the bottom of this expensive Samian pottery bowl. Sacra is a woman's name. She may have been the commanding officer's wife or a member of his family.



The workshops

Workshops (fabricae) were an important part of every Roman fort. The army imported some equipment and provisions but they also needed to be as self-sufficient as possible. There were blacksmiths and leather-workers in the fort at Castleford. The archaeologists found workshops in both of the Castleford forts.

The workshop building

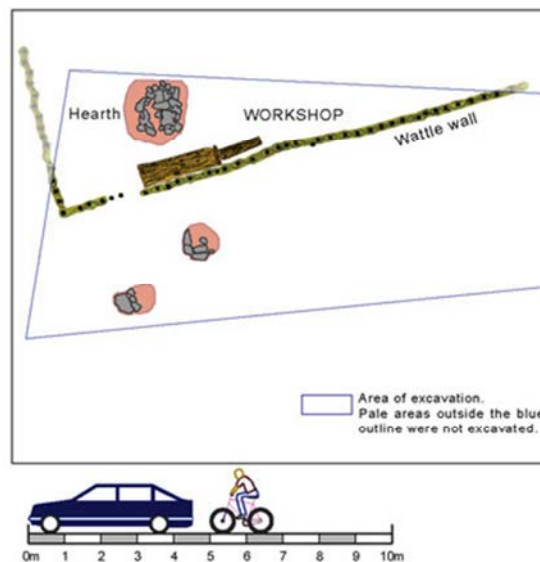
One building was found next to a large dump of craft-related finds so it has been identified as a workshop. This building was unusual because waterlogged soil conditions had preserved its wattle walls.

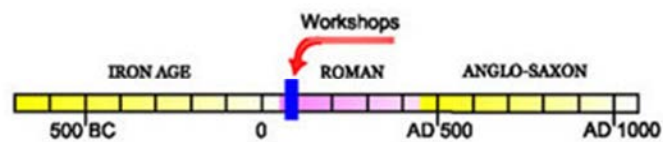
What was made and mended in the workshops?

- Leather – The archaeologists found leather-working tools, leather shoes, pieces of a tent, shield covers and many scrap pieces of leather.
- Cloth - Needles, weaving combs and pieces of fabric
- Wood and bone - Scrap pieces of wood and bone
- Metal – The archaeologists found evidence for working in copper and silver.

Enamelled flasks made at Castleford

Numerous flask moulds were found in a clay-lined pit next to the granaries. The moulds include patterns for decoration. The Castleford moulds are extremely important because no evidence has been found on any other Roman site for the manufacture of these flasks. Examples of enamelled flasks like those made at Castleford have been found on sites in Croatia and Holland



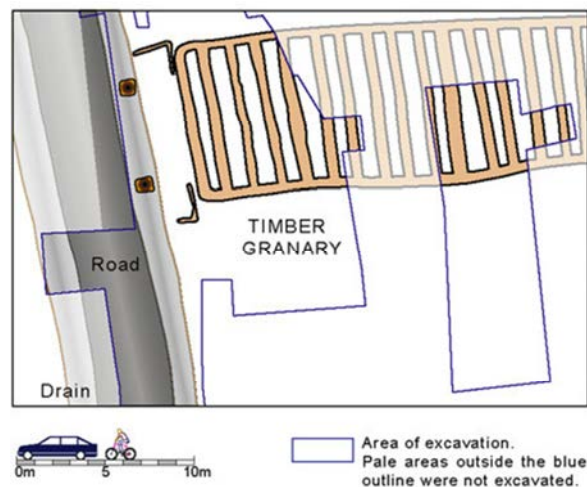


The granaries

It was important to the Roman army to have enough grain to feed its soldiers. The grain was stored in large granaries inside the fort. Granaries were large buildings with raised floors to keep the grain dry and out of reach of pests such as rats. A wooden granary was later replaced by a stone building.

The timber granary

The granary was built on a solid base of compacted gravel and the timber foundations were put in narrow trenches. The structure had to be strong to hold the weight of the grain. Later the timber granary was dismantled and a new stone granary was built in the same place.

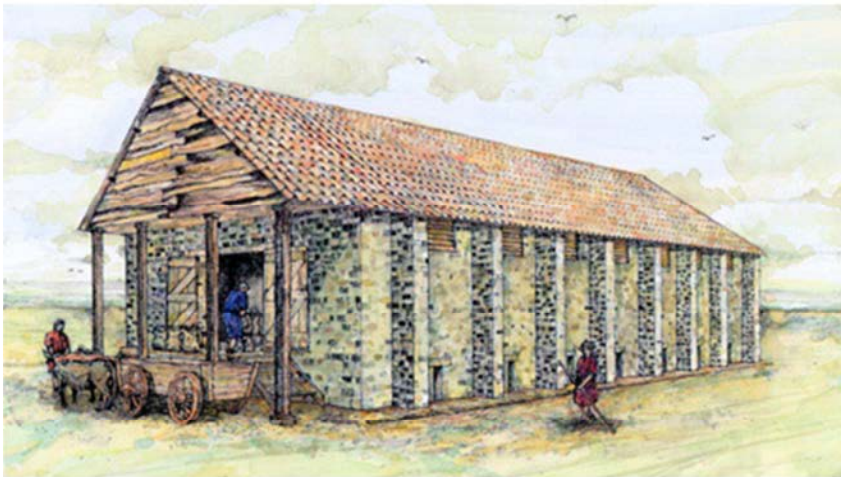


1. The archaeologists found the narrow trenches which had held the wood foundations of the timber granary. Posts which supported the floor above were set along the line of the beams.

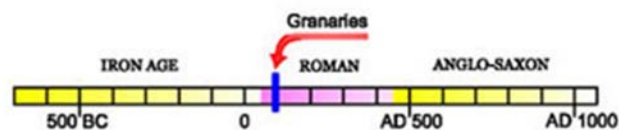
The stone granary

The stone granary was slightly bigger and had stone walls on stone foundations. Like the timber granary, the raised timber floor was supported by upright wooden posts inserted into wooden beams. Stone buttresses outside the walls added extra strength to the building.

The stone granary had stone walls and a raised wooden floor supported by beams and posts. The large post-holes close to the road are part of a loading platform.



3. This reconstruction is based on the plan of the stone granary found by the archaeologists, and shows what it may have looked like.



The rubbish dump

Why is a rubbish dump interesting?

There are several ways that objects get into the ground for archaeologists to find much later. People might have

- accidentally dropped and lost them, or
- deliberately buried them, or
- put them in the bin to get taken to the dump.

In Roman Castleford, just like now, not many things were accidentally lost or deliberately buried. But the rubbish dump (or midden) produced many finds.

When was the rubbish dump used?

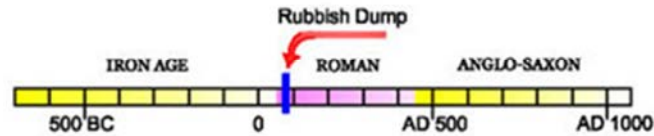
The dump was next to a workshop. It contained rubbish from the workshops. It was also used when the army prepared to leave the fort in AD 85. They threw away damaged and unwanted items that they didn't want to take with them. The finds included military objects, domestic objects and craft tools.



Why were there so many unusual and well-preserved finds?

The clay soil under the rubbish dump did not drain well so the rubbish dump stayed wet. Wet soils tend to preserve organic materials such as wood and leather very well. This was the only part of the fort to produce large quantities of organic finds.





The bath-house

The bath-house was an important part of a Roman fort. The army encouraged soldiers to use the bathhouse regularly in order to keep them healthy. Bathhouses were also places where the soldiers could relax, play games and socialise.

What did the archaeologists find?

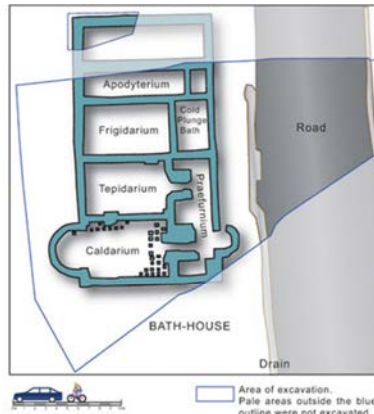
The Castleford bathhouse was located in the annexe. It was close to the river which would have been important for providing clean water to the baths and draining away the dirty water.



1. Archaeologists found that the ground plan of the bathhouse was almost complete. The stacks of tiles (pilae) in the bottom right of the photo held up the floor of the hot room. They allowed hot air to circulate under the floor and warm the room above.

How was the bath-house used?

Bathers entered the changing room (the apodyterium) where they removed their clothes. Then they went into a series of rooms which were heated to different temperatures in order to get the bathers sweating! Heat was produced in the boiler room (the praefurnium) and hot air was circulated beneath the floors of the hot and warm rooms.



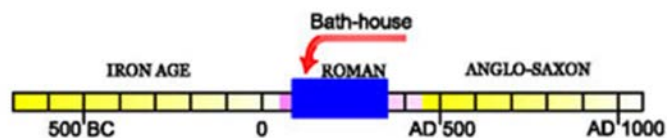
2. Bathers went first into the cold room (the frigidarium), then the warm room (the tepidarium) and then the hot room (the caldarium). Once clean, they cooled down by going back through the warm and cold rooms. Then they could jump into a cold plunge bath to close the pores in their skin.



3. An impression of the bath-house at Castleford.

Saved for the future

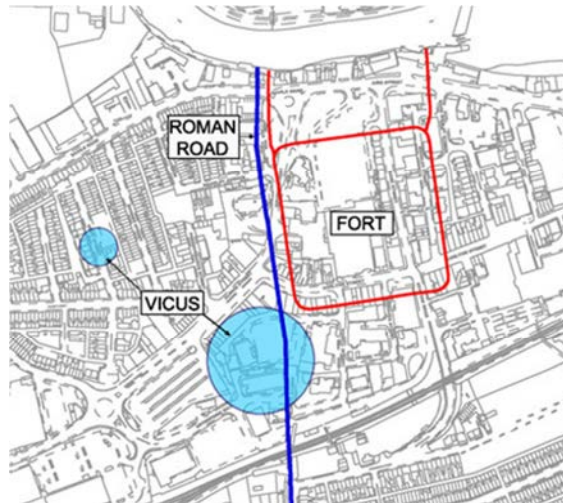
The Castleford bathhouse was too important to allow it to be destroyed by excavation. The remains of the building are preserved beneath a grassed area at the junction of Church Street and Savile Road.



Excavations - the vicus

Where was Lagentium?

Castleford was known to be the site of a Roman fort called Lagentium, but only archaeological excavations could prove for certain where it was. Archaeologists have clearly identified not just a Roman fort, but also a vicus (or civilian settlement) outside the fort.



The vicus

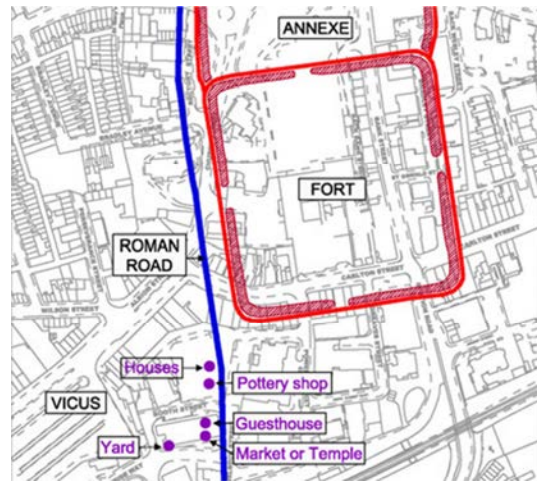
The civilian settlement outside a fort is called a vicus. Local craft-workers and traders came to live in the vicus so they could sell goods and services to the Roman army. The soldiers' families also lived in the vicus. The Castleford vicus was just outside the fort next to the main Roman road.

Who lived there and what did it look like?

Who lived in the vicus?

The population included a mix of Romans and Britons. Traders and craftsmen came to settle in the vicus as soon as the fort was built in AD 71. Soldier's families also lived in the vicus. Some soldiers may also have settled here permanently after leaving the army. As the Britons and Romans adopted parts of each other's lifestyles, the vicus population is best described as 'Romano-British'.

People continued to live and work here for about 80 years after the army left. They were able to keep trading with travellers using the Roman road. The vicus was abandoned in about AD 180.

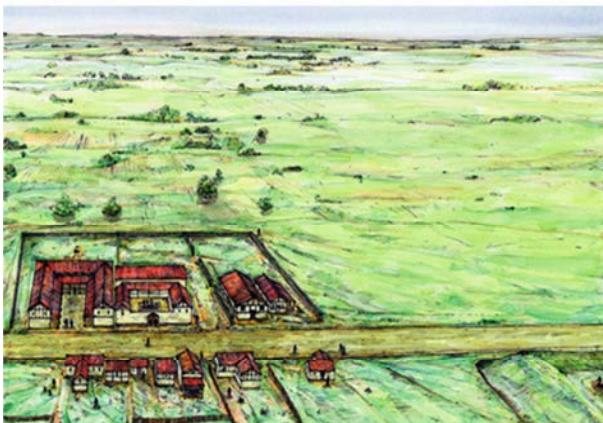


1. The vicus lay to the south west and west of the fort. Unlike the fort, it was not protected by defences. The main buildings were along the main Roman road leading to the fort.

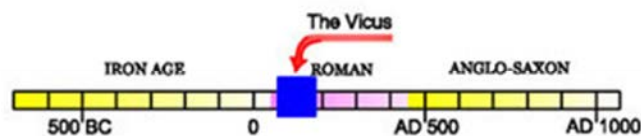
What did the vicus look like?

The earliest buildings were rows of houses and workshops. These were built from timber. Later the wooden structures were replaced with larger stone buildings such as a guest house, a market and a pottery shop.

The archaeologists were only able to investigate a small part of the vicus, so we don't know how far it stretched.



2. A reconstruction of the vicus (civilian settlement) at Castleford



The houses and workshops

What did the archaeologists find?

The first civilians of Roman Castleford lived and worked in a row of wooden buildings along the side of the Roman road. Between the buildings and the Roman road there was a drainage ditch.



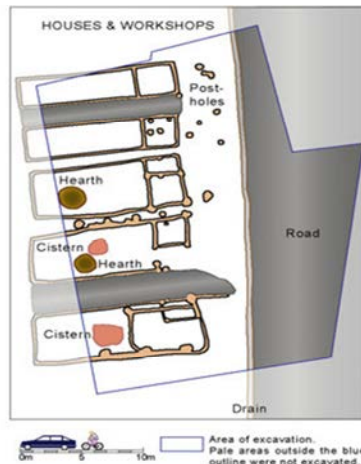
1. The wooden houses left very little evidence behind them, as all the wood had long since decayed. In this photo taken during excavation you can see the outline of two small square buildings on the right, with yards behind them to the left.



2. The foundations of the houses were timber beams, laid in narrow trenches to provide a solid base for the upright posts. This photo shows the beam slots and postholes that remained after the wood had rotted away.

The archaeologists' plan

The row of narrow buildings was similar to a Victorian terrace of houses. There was a long thin yard to the rear of each building. Alleyways provided access to the back yards. The roads along the alleys were made from compacted gravel. The archaeologists found cartwheel ruts still surviving in the surface of one alley.

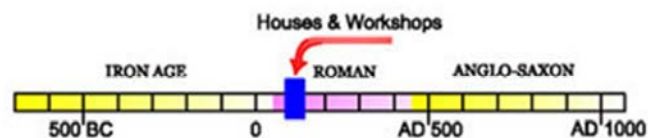


3. The archaeologists found evidence of workshops in some of the back yards. The excavations uncovered wells, cisterns for collecting rainwater, hearths and an oven in the yards.

What might the street have looked like?



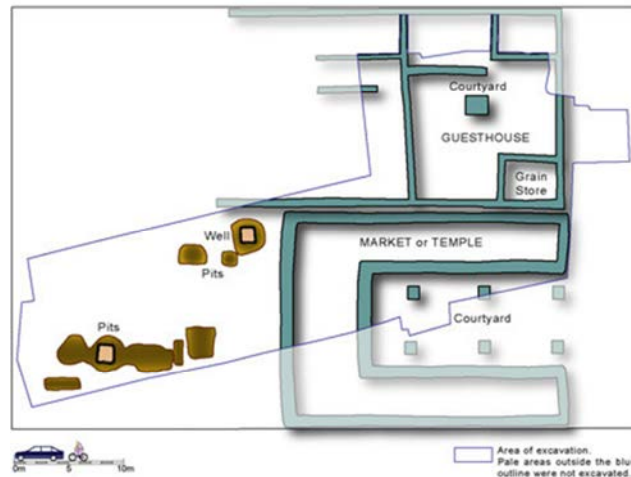
4. A reconstruction of the row of houses and workshops. The cart and soldier are travelling along the road in the direction of the fort.



The guest house

What did the archaeologists find?

Travellers along the Roman road needed food, drink and rest. The archaeologists found the guest house (mansio) where travellers could stay next to the road and close to the fort.



1. The guest house was laid out round a courtyard. Small rooms opened off the courtyard and there was a statue in the middle of the courtyard.

What did the guest house look like?

The guest house was built from stone and was one of the largest buildings in the vicus. The archaeologists found a well-made stone floor in one of the rooms. The floor was made with a mixture of concrete and crushed tile called opus signinum.

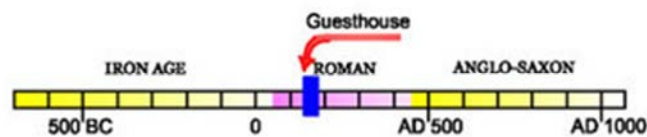
2. The reconstruction shows what the guest house and the temple/market building next door might have looked like from the road. The guest house is on the right.

Evidence from the finds

One of the small rooms was a grain store. The investigations revealed that the grain store had burned down. Most of the guest house was built from stone but the grain store had a wooden floor. The archaeologists found evidence of burnt timbers and burnt grain in the storeroom.



3. Archaeologists excavating the grain store. Like the granaries in the fort it had a raised wooden floor. This kept the grain dry and away from rats. Botanical (plant) evidence shows that wheat had been kept in the store. Barley, rye, oats and hazel nuts were also found.

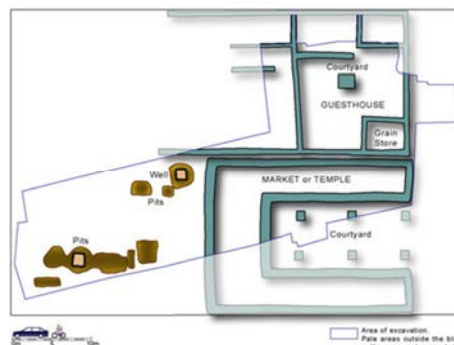


The market or temple

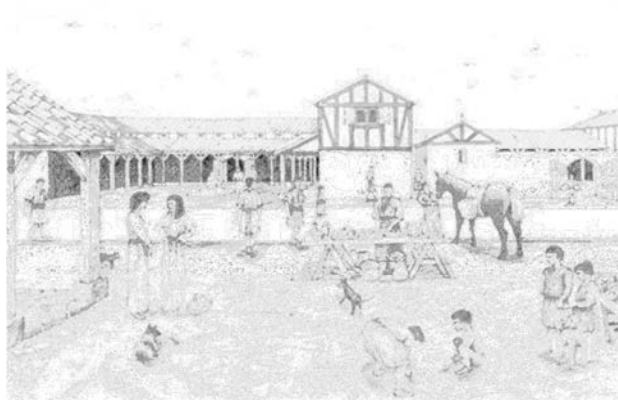
A problem of interpretation

Archaeologists haven't been able to decide what one building was used for. The evidence is set out below. Which interpretation do you think is best?

What did the building look like?



1. The building which may have been a market or temple was next door to the guest house, just across a narrow alleyway. It was a large stone building with a courtyard facing the main road. There was an open corridor on three sides of the courtyard.



2. This reconstruction shows what the market/temple building might have looked like from the road. The market/temple building is on the left.

What objects were found in the building?

The archaeologists found many objects including: coins, glass bottles, pottery, bronze rings and a silver ring, a parrot gemstone, a gold amulet case, brooches, locks and a key.

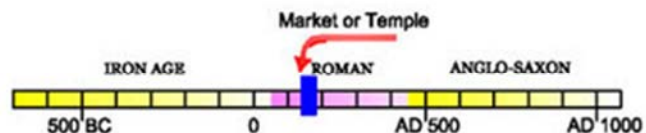
The evidence for a market place

The layout of the building is similar to other Roman markets.
It is close to the road – to attract customers.
Many coins were used in this building (23 in total).

The evidence for a temple

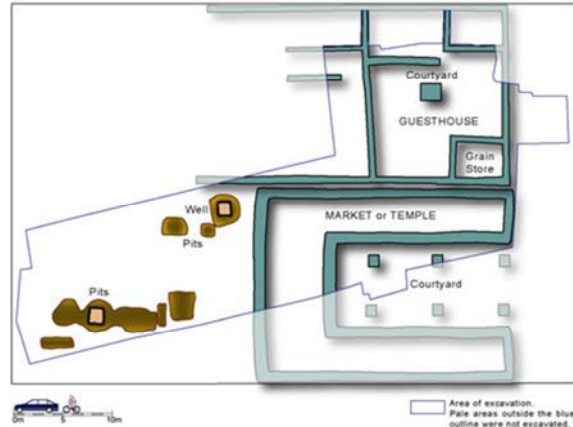
Archaeologists found a pottery incense burner (tazza).
Beneath the building was a carved stone dedicated to the water nymphs.
The glass bottles and pottery were offerings not rubbish.

Which interpretation do you think is best?



The yard

What did the archaeologists find?



1. There was a yard behind the guest house and market/temple. The archaeologists found a well and eight pits in the yard.

Why is a yard important?

Like the rubbish dump in the fort, waterlogged soil conditions in the yard allowed organic materials like wood and bone to be preserved.

The well and the pits had been filled in with rubbish when they were no longer needed. Parasite eggs and plant pollen were found in a sample of soil from one of the pits. This is evidence that a toilet had been emptied into the pit.

The well

After the archaeologists removed the fill from the well, they found pieces of wooden lining. This would have helped to stop the sides falling in.

The pits

Archaeologists found the remains of a ladder propped up against the side of one of the pits.
Two other pits had a wooden lining like the well.



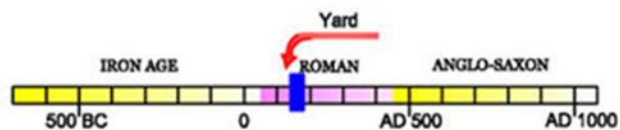
2. A timber-lined well



3. A wooden ladder inside one of the pits

What other objects were in the pits and the well?

The archaeologists found a large quantity of broken glass bottles and pottery. They also found bronze, lead and iron objects, coins, bone objects and a small oil lamp.



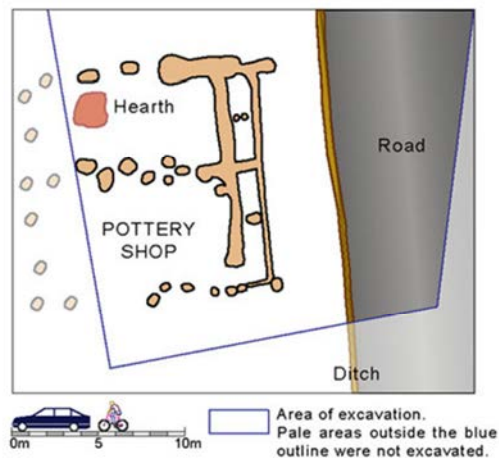
The pottery shop

A pottery shop?

The fort and vicus needed a good supply of pottery. In the past pottery was used for storage jars, for flagons for holding liquids, and for cooking pots, as well as the 'tablewares' that we are familiar with. Some pots were made locally, but others were imported to Britain from Spain, Germany and France.

The archaeologists found a large quantity of unused pottery in one of the vicus buildings. Archaeologists identified it as either a pottery shop or a large storeroom for pottery.

What did the building look like?



1. The pottery shop... It was a large wooden building next to the Roman road. The pottery shop had two large rooms at the back and two small rooms next to the road. There was an oven in one of the large rooms.

Fire!

The archaeologists discovered that the pottery shop was destroyed in a fire. Before the fire the pots had been stacked ready for sale. The building collapsed and the pots were broken into hundreds of pieces. The heat from the fire also left burn marks on the pottery.



2. The heat from the fire and the collapse of the building caused the pots to break into many small pieces.

What kind of pots were for sale?

There were two types of pottery in the pottery shop:

Samian

The Romans liked to have Samian pottery to use at the dining table. It had a red, glossy finish and was often decorated with moulded patterns showing plants, people and animals. Most Samian was made in Central France. Samian is important to archaeologists because it can be closely dated from the potters' stamps. The potters' stamps on the Samian show that the fire happened in about AD 140.

Mortaria

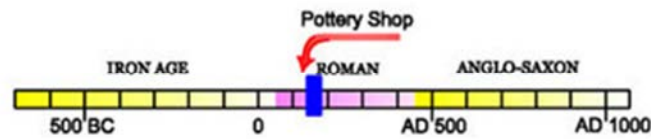
The mortarium was a mixing bowl with grit set into the inside surface to help break down. This type of pottery was used to make mixing bowls.



3. Potter's mark. This is the mark of a potter called Pateratus who worked in Lezoux, Central France in AD 135 – 155.



4. The pottery shop also stocked mixing bowls called mortaria. The Romans introduced mortaria to Britain but local potters soon began making it as well. The mortaria from the pottery shop were all made in Castleford.



Finds

What was found?

The excavations produced a huge quantity of finds including:

- Pottery
- Coins
- Objects made from metal such as brooches and armour
- Objects made from glass
- Brick, tile and plaster
- Objects made from stone
- Leather and textiles
- Objects made from wood
- Animal and human bone
- Seeds and pollen



How do finds get into the ground?

Many of the finds come from rubbish pits but some objects may have been dropped and lost by accident. Others could have been deliberately buried as an offering as part of a religious ritual.

Why are finds so important?

The finds provide valuable information about the lifestyle of the people who lived and worked in Roman Castleford. They are also important because many can be dated and so show how Castleford changed over the centuries.

The Army

Evidence for the garrison

The finds from the excavations proved that there were cavalry soldiers as well as infantry soldiers stationed at Castleford in the first and second forts. In particular there are many metal

fittings from horse harness. The harnesses were made from leather straps and metal fittings, but only the metal fittings have survived.



Military equipment from the rubbish dump

The waterlogged rubbish pit from the first fort preserved leather army equipment. Archaeologists normally don't find these because they usually rot away quickly in the soil. Leather off-cuts from repair included parts of tents, a shield cover, part of a saddle, tool bags and shoes.



Craft and Trade

Army craftsmen

The archaeologists found evidence of army craftsmen making and repairing equipment. In the first fort, leather workers discarded parts of worn out-tents and other leather equipment in a rubbish dump. Wooden off-cuts and other wooden objects from the same dump show carpenters at work. Slightly later, metal workers in the second fort left behind the broken moulds from making flasks decorated with enamel patterns.



1. This awl has a wooden handle with an iron point. It may have come from the leather workshop in the first fort.

Spoon making

In the late Roman settlement there was a workshop making spoons, the only one found so far using composite moulds on any Roman site.



2. Parts of clay moulds for making spoons.

Trade and shopping

There was a thriving local economy. Archaeologists found 175 coins and several weights for measuring out goods for sale. They also identified a pottery shop, stocked with large quantities of imported Samian pottery.



3. A weight for use with scales.

Religion and Belief

The Romans brought their own religion to Britain. They worshipped many gods, each of whom was responsible for one aspect of life. These included Jupiter the king of the gods, Juno the goddess of women and fertility, Mercury the messenger of the gods and Mars the god of war. Large sculptures from the later Roman settlement at Castleford show that people living in Castleford had taken up formal Roman religious beliefs and practices.

Soldiers in the Roman army were recruited from across the Roman Empire, and they also brought in their own religions and myths from their home countries. However, local people were free to continue to worship their traditional gods.



Dress

Brooches for fastening clothing

The archaeologists found 157 copper-alloy brooches during the dig. Both men and women, native British and Roman, used brooches to fasten their clothing. The brooches were made in many different designs.



1. A brooch called a headstud brooch, with the remains of colourful red and white enamel down the front. This is a native British design of brooch.

Jewellery for men and women

17 finger rings were found during the excavations, which might have been worn by men or women. Other types of unisex jewellery were pendants of carved bone or antler, and bangles of glass, shale and copper.



2. An iron finger ring, set with a glass intaglio carved with a capricorn.

Hair pins

Roman women used bone hairpins to create their elaborate hairstyles. Finds of hairpins show that some native British women adopted fashionable Roman hairstyles.



3. A selection of hair pins made from bone and antler. They were mainly found in the civilian vicus, since there were few women in the fort.

Health and Hygiene

The Romans placed great value on cleanliness. The army built bathhouses at forts in order to encourage the soldiers to be clean and healthy. At Castleford the bathhouse was just outside the fort, in between the fort and the river.



1. Artist's impression of the bath-house at Castleford.

The archaeologists found several objects related to health and hygiene in the fort and vicus. Some of them could have been used either for personal grooming or may have been medical instruments. Objects like tweezers are very similar to ones we use today. Most toilet implements were made from copper alloys such as bronze.



2. This set of forceps was found in the bathhouse and may have been used by a doctor or beautician who treated patients there.

Food and drink

Archaeologists found buildings in the fort and the vicus where grain was stored. Grain found in soil samples was mainly wheat, which was milled to produce flour. Other cereal grains such as barley, rye and oats were also found. Barley was used for food, animal fodder and brewing. These cereals were probably grown locally.



Very large quantities of animal bones were found. Cattle, sheep and pigs were raised for meat. Cows and sheep could also be milked. Archaeologists also found some deer and hare bones which show that wild animals were also hunted for food.



Archaeologists found evidence that cabbages, wild celery, sloes, plums, hazelnuts, walnuts, figs and grapes were also eaten. The walnuts, grapes and figs were imported into Britain.

Pottery and objects like knives and spoons also provide evidence for eating and drinking.



Caring for the Finds

Post-excavation work

The majority of the finds from Castleford were fragments of pottery and animal bone. The finds were washed and each fragment was marked in ink with a number to identify exactly where on site it was found. Metal objects are more delicate, so they were cleaned by a specialist conservator. Then each group of finds was studied by a specialist archaeologist who provided information for a published report on the excavations.

Long-term care

Once the finds had been studied and the report published, all the finds, plans and photographs were handed over to Wakefield Council Museum Service. A limited number of the finds can be seen on display at Castleford Museum

After the Romans

The end of the fort and vicus

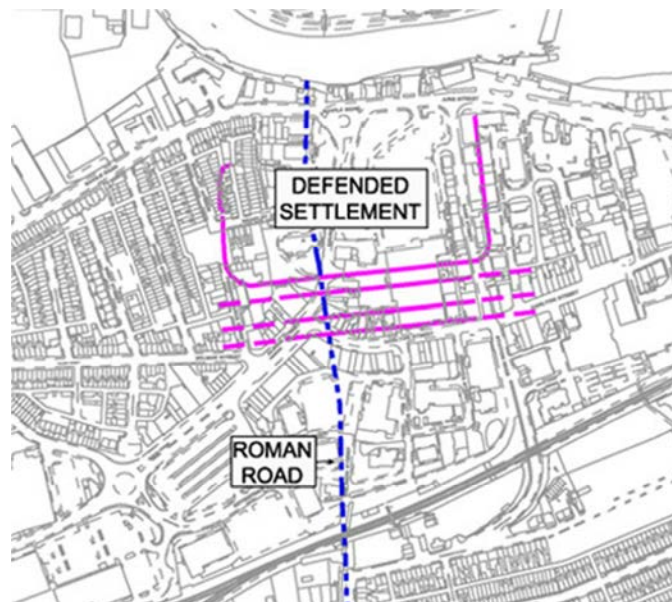
The Roman army left the Castleford fort in about AD 100, probably because the area around Castleford was peaceful.

People went on living in the shops and workshops of the vicus after the Roman army left. They probably earned their living from the travellers using the Roman road through Castleford on the way to the new Roman town at York (Eboracum).

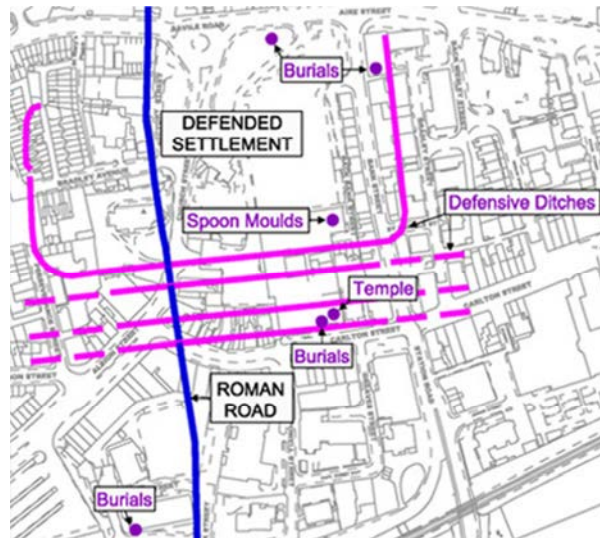
Gradually the number of people in the vicus declined and by AD 180 the buildings were empty and derelict.

A new Castleford

A new settlement was built on the site of the Roman forts from AD 250. This time it was not Roman soldiers who lived there, but native Britons who had taken on a Romanised lifestyle. They are sometimes called Romano-British.

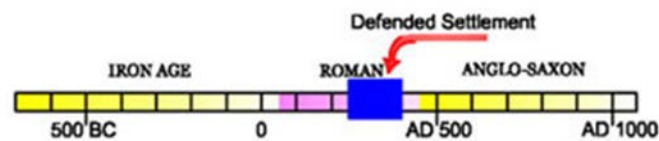


1. The Romano-British people who built the new settlement were concerned about their safety. They protected themselves with four large ditches.



2. The main finds from this date were a temple, some burials and evidence of spoon-making.

The new builders had a ready supply of stone from the old vicus and fort buildings. The archaeologists also found 2 lime kilns for mortar production. The evidence from coins and pottery finds tells us that Romano-British people lived in Castleford until about AD 400.



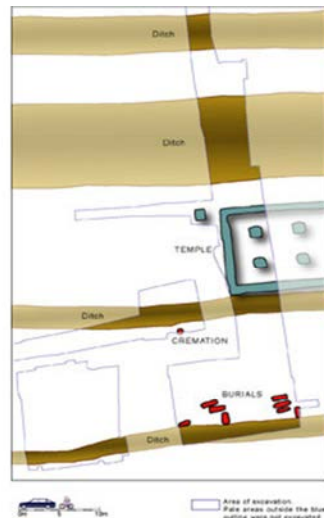
The temple and burials

What was the temple like?

The temple was built between two of the defensive ditches. Unfortunately the archaeologists didn't have time to excavate all of the building.



1. The archaeologists only found the stone foundations of the western end of the building.



2. The temple was an imposing building. A doorway led into a large room with two rows of columns.

How many burials were found?

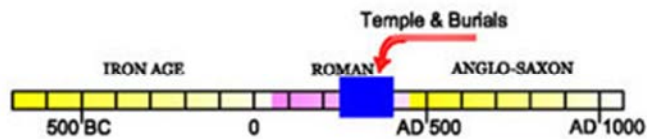
The graves were spread out across the site. Some contained inhumations and some contained cremated bone. The archaeologists found 7 inhumations and 3 cremations near to the temple. At the old vicus site there were 7 more inhumations and a further 2 inhumations were found close to the river.



3. This burial was found near to the bathhouse. It was the grave of a small child.



4. This burial was found in the vicus area. It was the grave of a woman aged over 35 years. She may have died from tuberculosis.



Spoon making

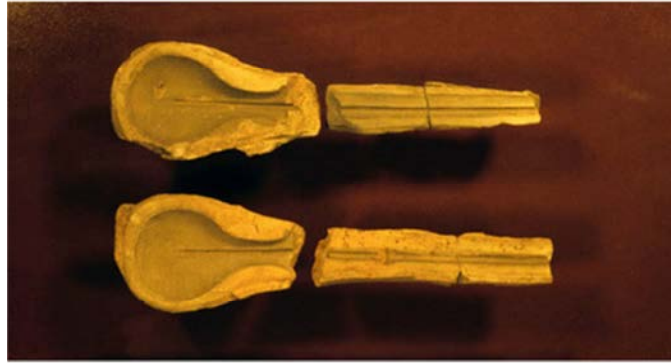
The archaeologists found that spoon making was a major industry within the new defended settlement. They found hundreds of pieces of broken moulds in a small pit. Each mould was used only once and then thrown into the rubbish pit.



1. The spoon moulds were found in a small pit to the left of the photo but no evidence of a workshop building was found.

How were the spoons made?

The moulds were made from local clay. The clay was pressed against the front and back of a model spoon to make an impression of the spoon in the clay. Then these were joined together into a composite mould for about 16 spoons. Molten metal was poured into the mould and allowed to cool. Then the mould was then broken open to remove the new spoons.



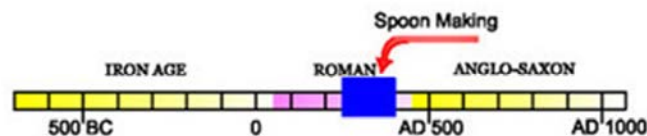
2. The moulds are all fragments because they were broken open to remove the spoons.



3. Modern reconstruction of the spoons based on mould fragments.

Why are the spoon moulds important?

The Castleford moulds are unique. They are the best evidence for this type of spoon making in Britain and the western Roman Empire.



Lagentium to Castleford

Roman Lagentium

The Roman army left the fort in AD 100. Some of the population stayed in Castleford and in fact the vicus prospered after the army left. The vicus was abandoned in about AD 180. A new Romano-British defended settlement was built in about AD 250. It was abandoned again about AD 400, about the time that the Roman occupation of Britain ended.

Anglo-Saxon Ceaster forda

A place called 'Ceaster forda' is mentioned in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicles in AD 948. This Anglo-Saxon name means 'the river crossing near the fort'.

Norman Castleford

Castleford is not mentioned in the Domesday Book but other historic documents refer to a settlement called 'Castreford' (or 'Castelforde') in about AD 1130. By the 1170s the settlement included watermills and a parish church. Archaeologists have not yet found any evidence for the Anglo-Saxon or Norman settlement.

The Village of Castleford

Castleford was probably a small village in the medieval period. The archaeologists found some fragments of medieval pottery during the dig and some evidence of buildings near to the church.



1. The archaeologists found medieval pottery in the upper layers of soil, above the Roman remains.

By the early 1800s Castleford was an agricultural village with a population of 800 people. Maps from this time show that the village was centred around the site of the Roman settlement. There were mills, a church and rectory, houses, orchards, ponds, gardens and fields.

Industrial Castleford

Castleford expanded during the industrial revolution. Pottery and glass production began in the early 1800s but coal mining was the main industry from the 1850s onwards. Many people moved to the town to take up jobs. Houses, pubs, schools and hospitals were built. By the 1890s Castleford had a population of 15,000 people.

Today Castleford's population is about 35,000.

