

Romans on the Don Classroom Exercise 2

Having a Roman Bath at Hampole

At least seventeen surveys or excavations were carried out at Hazel Lane between 1993 and 2003. These found evidence of field ditches, pits, and a driveway. In the centre of the site were found the footings of a stone building ([Exercise 2 Picture 1.jpg](#)). This area also had lots of pottery, most of it being a made locally in kilns near Doncaster and mainly oven to table wares for cooking and serving food. Other artefacts from this area include roof tiles, burnt clay or daub, slag from metal working, and charred grains of wheat/barley.

The foundations of the building were mortared and showed an L-shaped building with at least four rooms. One or two rooms were built above a hypocaust – an under floor heating system introduced to Britain by the Romans. A hypocaust worked by having a floor of slabs raised up on pillars of tiles, making the under floor area hollow. A furnace would be lit at the bottom of an exterior wall and hot air would circulate under the floor before being drawn up the walls through hollow tiles to chimneys.

The building was a domestic bathhouse. The first room (left-hand side) would have been a changing room, possibly also used for exercise, where bathers removed their clothes and put on wooden sandals to protect their feet from the hot floors above the hypocaust. Next to this was a warm room, heated by the hypocaust, and adjacent to this a hot room. Bathers would sweat in the hot room to clean their pores of dirt. Built on to the hot room was a cold room with a semi-circular cold plunge pool. Here bathers would be massaged. The bathhouse was decorated with plaster, the remains of which show that it was painted with a red, green, blue and yellow design on a white background that probably depicted a mythical figure or god ([Exercise 2 Picture 2.jpg](#)).

Iron Age Britons washed themselves with soap. Romans didn't use soap. Instead, oil was rubbed into the skin, after the heat had opened skin pores, and then scraped off (using a tool called a *strigil*). Many wealthy families also had their own private bath houses built next to their homes. This indicated to others your high status and wealth, as well as how 'Roman' you were.

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Exercise 2. Having a Roman Bath at Hampole

Show the pupils the illustration of the bath house ([Exercise 2 Picture 1.jpg](#)).

What are people in each room doing?

What do they think the Britons would have thought about a hypocaust where a room could be kept warm by under floor central heating?

What are the advantages of heating a stone house in this way compared to a wooden house with a single fire?

Central heating can warm lots of people at the same time – there would be no need to argue over who gets closest to the fire on cold days. Wooden houses would be more likely to catch fire.

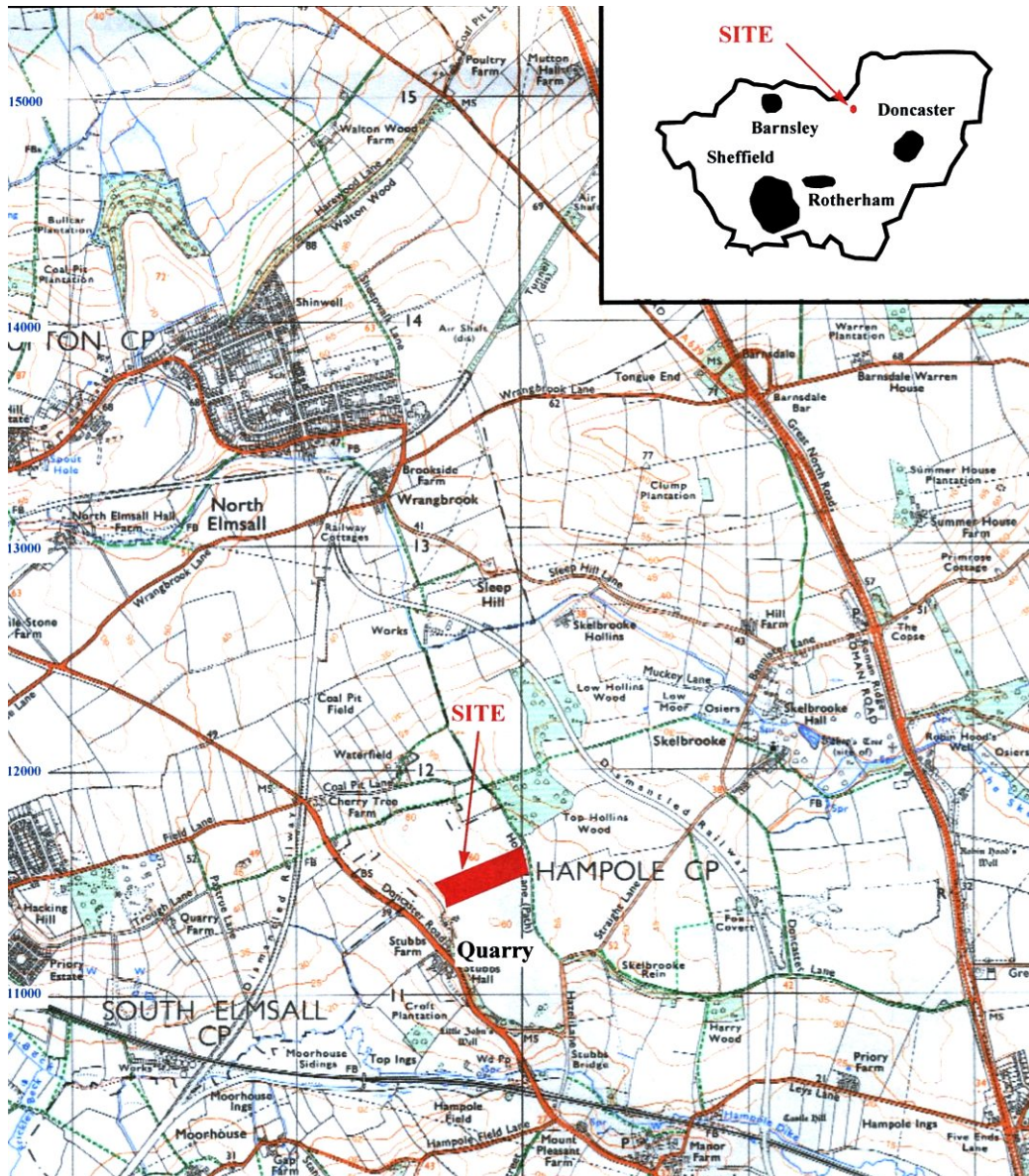
Show the pupils the picture of the painted plaster from the bath house ([Exercise 2 Picture 2.jpg](#)).

What colours can be seen?

What patterns or pictures do the pupils think may have been on the walls of a bath house?

Let the pupils paint their own ideas. Some ideas are shown on [Exercise 2 Picture 3.jpg](#).

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Location of Hampole archaeological site

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Exercise 2 Picture 1. Bath house at Hazel Lane. From left to right = changing/exercise room, warm room with hypocaust, hot room (behind door), cold room with D-shaped cold plunge pool



Exercise 2 Picture 2. Painted wall plaster from Hazel Lane bath house. Green, blue, yellow and red colours can be seen on the plaster and would have created a pattern or picture when the bath house was still standing and in use

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