



KS2 & KS3

TEACHERS' RESOURCE PACK

Lullingstone Roman Villa

This resource pack has been designed to help teachers plan a visit to Lullingstone Roman Villa, which provides essential insight into the lives of the Romans in Britain. Use these resources on-site or in the classroom to help students get the most out of their learning.



INCLUDED

- Historical Information
- Glossary
- Sources
- Site Plan

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- Magic & Medicine
- Lullingstone Life

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HISTORICAL INFORMATION

DISCOVER THE STORY
OF LULLINGSTONE

Below is a short history of Lullingstone Roman Villa. Use this information to learn how the site has changed over time. You'll find definitions for the key words in the Glossary resource on pages 5 & 6.

THE FIRST OCCUPANTS

Roman occupation began at Lullingstone between AD 100 and AD 150 with a modest timber-framed house on **mortared flint foundations**. This was transformed in the late 2nd century into a luxury home with a tiled roof, a **bath suite** and a **pagan shrine (cult room)**.

The owners during this period were wealthy people who used high-quality pottery and glassware. The bath suite had hot, tepid and cold rooms, the latter being plastered and painted.

The remains of the cult room provide evidence of the owners' pagan beliefs: the walls were painted with **frescoes** of water goddesses, commonly associated with the cult worship of a water deity. A picture of three water **nymphs** can still be seen in a niche in this room. These paintings, though much decayed, show a high level of skill and provide a rare glimpse of Roman interior decoration.



This drawing shows how the the first villa at Lullingstone may have looked between AD 100 and AD 150.

A GOVERNER'S RETREAT?

At some point during the 3rd century, the entrance steps to the cult room were blocked and two life-sized **marble busts** appear to have been placed on or near the lowest steps that went down into the room. These busts may provide evidence for who owned the villa, and how they used it.

One of the busts is thought to represent Publius Helvius Pertinax, governor of Britannia between AD 185 and AD 186 and **Emperor** for three months in AD 193.

Pertinax reigned for 87 days, before being murdered by his own soldiers. The other bust has been identified as representing Publius Helvius Successus, the father of Pertinax.

It has also been suggested that an engraved gemstone (cornelian intaglio), from a ring found at Lullingstone, was Pertinax's **personal seal**. Therefore, it is possible that the villa may have been his country residence.



An engraved gemstone found at Lullingstone. Could it be from a ring belonging to Emperor Pertinax?

3RD CENTURY FINDS

In the later 3rd century, some of the rooms were demolished and replaced with a narrower range of five rooms, three of which incorporated an under-floor heating system. Two external buildings – the **granary** and the **temple-mausoleum** – also date to this period.

The central room in the temple-mausoleum 'the cella' was later used for the burial of a young couple. The lead coffin of the male was found still intact, decorated with scallop shells and a cable pattern.

Despite the actions of grave robbers, an impressive range of grave goods was found with the burials. These included bronze and pottery flagons (used for serving drink), a glass bottle and bowls, two silver spoons, 30 glass gaming counters and a bone disc carved with the head of **Medusa**.



Bronze jug and ceramic jug on display. These were found in Lullingstone's mausoleum.

A VILLA IN ITS PRIME

Around the middle of the 4th century, the central core of the house was altered drastically. A dining room or 'triclinium' was built, with an attached audience chamber. The two fine mosaics found in these rooms demonstrate the increasing prosperity of the villa. In the dining room, the mosaic tells the mythical story of **Europa**, who was abducted by the god Jupiter, disguised as a bull. In the audience chamber, the other mosaic tells the story of **Bellerophon**, Prince of Corinth, on the winged-horse **Pegasus**, killing the **Chimera**, a fire-breathing she-monster.



This drawing shows the mosaics as they would have looked in the 4th century.

Most of the remains that we see today date from the 4th-century rebuilding and provide evidence of the opulence of domestic life at Lullingstone at that time.

DRAMATIC CHANGES AT LULLINGSTONE

Around AD 370, the owners of Lullingstone installed a private Christian chapel above the cult room. The paintings on the walls of this **house-church** feature Christian symbols, such as a **Chi-Rho** (pronounced 'cairo'), and provide some of the earliest evidence for Christianity in Britain, with the closest parallels coming from a house-church in Syria. This is a unique find in Britain and one for which Lullingstone is famous. The fragmented remains of these painted panels have been conserved and are on display in the British Museum but copies can be seen at Lullingstone.



This drawing shows what the cult room may have looked like after the house church was created c. AD 370.

Strangely enough, the cult room below the house-church continued to be used for **pagan** worship. This raises a question as to whether the family were hedging their bets, by accepting Christianity while still trying to keep the old gods happy. Or perhaps some members of the family were clinging to old beliefs while those around them adopted Christianity. It might also be an expression of traditional Roman **polytheism**, where a variety of gods were worshipped.

DISCOVERING LULLINGSTONE ROMAN VILLA

The villa seems to have been abandoned at some point in the 5th century due to a destructive fire.

Lullingstone Roman Villa was discovered in the 18th century by labourers digging holes for fencing posts. It was then rediscovered by local archaeologists before the Second World War, and finally excavated between 1949 and 1961 by Colonel GW Meates. Clay washed down from the valley above the villa had been instrumental in preserving the remains of the villa walls and mosaics.

Further small-scale excavations by Dr David Neal in 1983 have told us much about the sequence of occupation at the site. In 1956 Lullingstone Roman Villa passed into the care of the Ministry of Works, a predecessor of English Heritage.



The entrance to Lullingstone Roman Villa today.

GLOSSARY

WEIRD WORDS AND
THEIR MEANINGS

Below is a list of words you might come across while exploring Lullingstone Roman Villa. Use this Glossary to find out what they mean.

Bath Suite – a group of rooms for bathing. Most people used public baths but rich Romans could afford bathrooms in their own homes, as at Lullingstone.

Bellerophon – the son of Poseidon (God of the Sea) and a mortal hero in Ancient Greek stories. When he was young, he honoured the gods and won their favour, but one day his pride led to his downfall.

Caldarium – ‘hot room’ in the bath suite.

Chimera – in Ancient Greek stories, a fire-breathing she-monster, made of the parts of different animals.

Chi-Rho – an early Christian symbol formed by the first two letters of Christ’s name in Greek, chi (χ) and rho (ρ).

Cult – at Roman Lullingstone, ‘cult’ was the ‘care’ owed to pagan gods, practised through ritual and ceremony.



An engraved gemstone found at Lullingstone, possibly from Emperor Pertinax’s ring.

Emperor – the ruler of the Roman state during the imperial period (usually dated 27 BC to AD 284).

Europa – a beautiful maiden in Ancient Greek mythology, most notable for her love affair with Zeus, the ruler of the Olympian gods. He notices her beauty and disguises himself as a white bull. Once she has climbed on the bull’s back, he charges away and kidnaps her.



A floor mosaic in the dining room at Lullingstone showing the story of Europa.

Fresco – a watercolour painting done quickly on wet plaster, so that the paint seeps into the wall and permanently sets when it is dry.

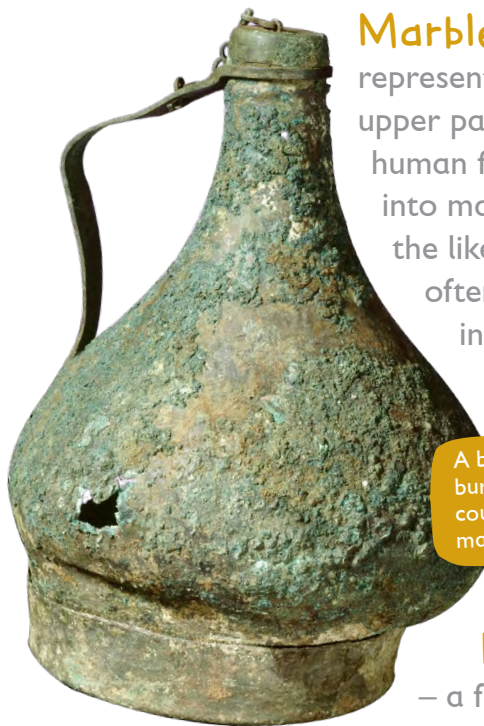
Frigidarium – ‘cold room’ in the bath suite.

Granary – a storehouse for grain.

House-church – applied to Christian worship, a room in a private home used for prayer and worship.

Jupiter – the god of sky and thunder and king of the gods in Roman religion and mythology.

Marble bust – a representation of the upper part of the human figure, carved into marble to create the likeness of an often important individual.



A bronze jug found buried with a young couple in Lullingstone's mausoleum.

Mausoleum – a free-standing building, a form

of tomb, which enclosed the burial chamber of a deceased person or people.

Medusa – a monster in Ancient Greek mythology, with snakes instead of hair; anyone who looked into her eyes was immediately turned to stone.

Mortared flint foundations

– a building base made from flint and filled in with a bonding agent.

Nymph – a minor deity of nature in Ancient Greek and Roman mythology, imagined as a beautiful maiden inhabiting rivers, woods or other locations.

Pagan – a member of a polytheistic religious community who worshipped many gods, such as the Ancient Romans and Greeks.

Pegasus – a flying horse in Ancient Greek mythology, usually depicted as white in colour. His father was Poseidon (God of the Sea) and his mother was Medusa.

Personal seal – an emblem associated with an authority figure. The seal was a symbol of imperial power, used for approving documents.

Polytheism – a belief in or worship of more than one god.

Shrine – a place regarded as holy, marked by a building or other construction, where worship and religious ceremonies took place and where offerings were made to the god or gods.

Temple – a building devoted to the worship of god or gods.

Tepidarium – ‘warm room’ in the bath suite.



Gaming counters found with many other grave goods dug up at Lullingstone.



A bone disc carved with the head of Medusa, found in the mausoleum.

SOURCES

PEEK INTO THE PAST

A historical source is something that tells us about life in the past, such as a document, a picture or an object. It may be a primary source, from the time, or a secondary source, created later. Experts at English Heritage have chosen these sources to help you learn about Lullingstone's history.



This drawing shows how the cult room may have looked in the 4th century after the house-church was created in the room above. By this time the cult room could only be reached from above, perhaps by a ladder, as shown here.

‘In the second half of the 4th century the rooms at the north end of the villa were probably re-organised for use as a house-church reached through a vestibule and ante-chamber. As a result of the early 5th-century fire these rooms were destroyed and plaster from the walls fell into room 6 below. The resulting thick layer of plaster was the first major discovery of this kind made in Britain, and it is fortunate that Lt.-Col. Meates and Mr Cragoe D.P. Nicholson realised the significance of this unattractive-looking material, much of it badly burned and crumbling. [...] eventually Mr Nicholson was able to reconstruct the scheme of decoration from the west wall and then, perhaps the crowning moment of his work, the piecing together of the great Chi-Rho monogram from the south wall, proof of the Christian significance already suspected.’

Extract from **The Lullingstone Roman Villa, Volume II: Wall Paintings and Finds** by GW Meates, 1987.

GW Meates' discovery of the Christian house-church and its wall paintings provides some of the earliest evidence for Christianity in Britain. This is a unique find and one for which Lullingstone is famous.

‘We have here a very rare, indeed probably almost unique, example of a signet which once belonged to a really important Roman, a senator and a governor of a province no less, and moreover one who was eventually to become Emperor [...] Far from being a mere curiosity, the Lullingstone intaglio should be seen as one of the most significant, and perhaps the most significant, surviving intaglio of the entire period, both for its qualities as a work of art and for its wider archaeological and historical context.’

Extract from **The Victory Gem from Lullingstone Roman Villa**, *Journal of the British Archaeological Association*, 160 (2007).

The engraved gemstone (cornelian intaglio) found at Lullingstone is from a gold signet ring. The engraving is Publius Helvius Pertinax’s personal seal. Pertinax was governor of Britannia between AD 185 and AD 186 and Emperor for three months in AD 193.



THE VICTORY GEM

The engraving on this gemstone is thought to be the personal seal of Pertinax. It shows Lady Victory standing, with one foot on a pile of stones, writing a message on a shield propped up against a trophy.

You can see this artefact on display at Lullingstone Roman Villa.



‘The two adult skeletons, one complete in its lead coffin, the other fragmentary, are of great importance, having been buried in a tomb-chamber with a Romano-Celtic temple constructed over it. No other Roman period burials were present, and the two persons were clearly of importance, possibly the owner of the villa and his wife in about AD 300, a date that can be fixed by the accompanying grave goods.’

Extract from **The Lullingstone Roman Villa, Volume II: Wall Paintings and Finds** by GW Meates, 1987.

The main body of knowledge regarding the Roman phases of Lullingstone Roman Villa derives from the 1941–61 excavations directed by GW Meates.





This drawing shows how the mosaics in the audience chamber and dining room may have looked in the 4th century.



‘There can be no doubt that whatever influence the Roman state had in southern Britain before the Claudian conquest, it was only after it that the major impact of being formally part of the Roman world started to be seen. People and goods poured into the new province. Soldiers, administrators, traders and craftsmen arrived as did items that virtually no Briton would have seen before, such as glass vessels.’

Extract from **Eating and Drinking in Roman Britain** by HEM Cool, 2006.

Claudius was Roman Emperor from AD 41 to AD 54. He expanded the Roman Empire when he invaded Britain in AD 43, and introduced a Roman way of life.

SITE PLAN

