**Roman Worcester (Vertis)**

* Worcester was a Roman ‘small town’ which may have been called Vertis, meaning ‘a bend in the river’.
* During the Roman period Worcester emerged as an important settlement on the [River Severn](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/River_Severn), connected by river to the forts at [Gloucester](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gloucester) and [Wroxeter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wroxeter) and by road to the small towns and industrial centres of [Alcester](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alcester), [Droitwich](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Droitwich_Spa), and [Kenchester](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenchester).
* It seems the Roman town was sited in a place which was already settled. Remains of banks and ditches, probably dating to the late Iron Age, have been found, and it is thought that there was a defended enclosure or fort here. Across the country, many of these Iron Age defended sites later developed into Roman towns.
* Worcester lies in the northern, poorer, half of the territory of the late iron-age tribe of the Dobunni. Four coins issued by the rulers of these peoples have been found within the city and one of a tribe far to the south, the Regnenses of Sussex.
* It has long been assumed that a fort existed somewhere in the centre of Worcester though no structural evidence of it has ever been found.
* Excavations in the 1960s suggested that the Iron-Age defences were re-dug in the [Julio-Claudian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julio-Claudian_dynasty) or [Neronian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero) period.
* Artefacts with military associations such as brooches and coins have been found at various places in the city, perhaps lost whilst building the Roman road through Worcester rather than the lost belongings of the garrison of a fort.
* By the late 1st century the settlement developed into a small town.
* The core of the Roman settlement lay on the high ground around [Worcester Cathedral](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Worcester_Cathedral), and was surrounded by a large earthwork rampart and ditch, which was first identified in the 1950s at Little Fish Street.
* The full extent of the Roman small town was much larger than the later medieval city, and probably covered an area of *c.*70-95 ha or more.
* While most buildings in the Roman small town were made of timber, the presence of more substantial Romanised buildings are indicated by finds of tesserae, flue tiles, painted wall plaster, and architectural stonework, including the remains of a limestone column found at The Butts.
* A pebble-surfaced road 18 feet wide ran through the suburb from north to south on the higher ground to the west.
* Its existence as a settlement is strengthened by its strategic importance as it is positioned on the road between Droitwich and Gloucester.
* As the Roman military passed across the Severn to campaign in Wales, the military significance of the river crossing at Worcester would have quickly faded.



This fine-quality Roman mosaic was found in Britannia Square, Worcester. It is likely to have paved the floor of a high quality townhouse and, although very small, is the largest fragment of mosaic from the city of Worcester.

Each piece of mosaic (made from tile, glass, or stone) is called a *tessera*.



In 1860 labourers found about twenty Roman vessels whilst digging for sand at Diglis in Worcester at a depth of about 3 to 4 feet. This is one of the best preserved examples. Roman coins and samian ware were also found. Several of the urns contained cremated bone.



This fine Samian ware bowl would have been made and imported from Gaul but was discovered during the building of cellars on the High Street, Worcester.

A miniature bronze axe found near Earl’s Croome, dating to the late Iron Age to Roman period (about 100 BC - AD 200). It’s not certain what such objects were used for - toys or apprentice pieces? The most likely interpretation is that they were a ritual object. Examples have been found on Roman temple sites, e.g. in Baldock, Hertfordshire, but there’s no evidence of a temple in Earl’s Croome. What this axe was doing here is a mystery – perhaps a Roman soldier dropped it as he marched through?

* Worcestershire had three major industries during the centuries of Roman rule; salt production, iron production and pottery manufacture. Together, they suggest a strong local, industrial economy.
* Worcester is best known for its ironworking and is part of a network of industrial ironworking sites that run from Cardiff to Worcester along the River Severn.
* The iron ore may well have come from the Forest of Dean via river transport or possibly from a closer, now exhausted source.
* Iron furnaces have been found at Deansway, Broad Street and Pitchcroft but dumped ironworking waste or iron slag as it is called has been found across the city.
* Evidence of glass making, copper and lead working has also been found in Worcester and a possible jeweller’s hoard from Hindlip has recently been recorded by the Portable Antiquities Scheme. The hoard included well worn coins and quantities of silver and gold.
* The Malvern area is well known for its important Roman pottery industry. This produced handmade ‘Malvernian ware,’ similar to pottery produced in the Iron-Age, and a new, wheel-made, Roman type known as ‘Severn Valley Ware.’
* This distinctive orange pottery was traded across central western England and has even been found on the northern frontier (along Hadrian’s Wall and the Antonine wall).
* The impression of the second and third century settlement is of a bustling industrial town and trading centre with extensive suburbs spreading loosely along the main axial road on the river terrace down into the river margins.
* In 2023, a hoard of gold and silver Roman coins dating back to the reign of Emperor Nero were found during building works in the Leigh and Bransford area.
* The treasure, consisting of 1,368 Iron Age and Roman coins, included the largest collection from the emperor's reign ever found.
* Most of the coins are silver denarii, minted in Rome and dating from the time of the Roman Republic in 157 BC up to Nero's reign between AD 54–68.
* The sole gold coin is an Iron Age stater, which was minted for the local British tribe, the **Dobunni**, who were in the area now known as Worcestershire and neighbouring counties to the south and west in AD 20–45.
* The hoard is the third to have been found in the area in the past 25 years.
* In 1999, 434 silver coins and 38 shards of pottery were found near Chaddesley Corbett.
* In a much larger find, two detectorists from Redditch found a clay pot full of 3,784 coins on Bredon Hill in 2011.
* Dr Murray Andrews, Lecturer in British Archaeology, UCL Institute of Archaeology is leading research into the find. He said:

This is the largest hoard of the reign of Nero (AD 54–68) ever found in Britain, and one of the largest of this period ever found in the entire Roman Empire. The coins come from every corner of the early Roman world, from the shores of the Mediterranean right up to the Cotswold Hills. They were buried just after the Claudian invasion, as Roman troops marched through western Britain to battle the tribes of Wales and the Welsh Border. It’s a remarkable discovery, and sheds important new light on the Roman Conquest – a time of conflict and change at the beginnings of British history.



