

Revisit Roman Arbeia

Fort site information: teacher's notes

Revisit Roman Arbeia is split into four parts, all of which can be downloaded from Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums' website:

| | Tick: |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| Gallery Search | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Fort site information | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| Reconstruction Search | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| A Story of Three Emperors | <input type="checkbox"/> |

How to use the 'fort site information' pack...

Use this information pack to guide your group around the fort site.

The excavations can be very confusing; it is recommended that you conduct a preliminary visit before your trip.

Learning objectives

- Which buildings have been excavated at Arbeia?
- What was the purpose of each building?

Cautionary note

Please be aware that the fort site can get very slippery and muddy. Please be careful when crossing the excavations.

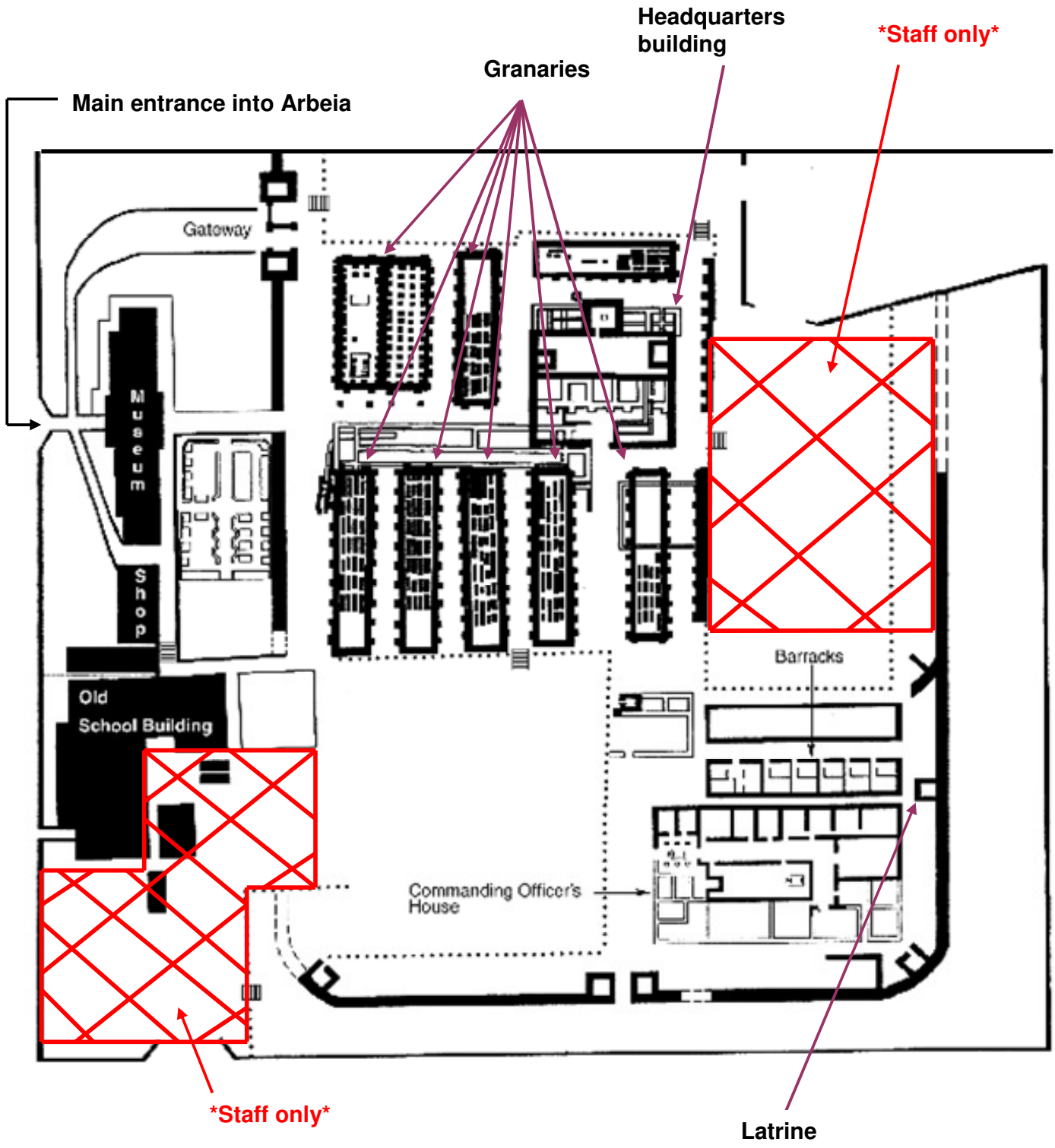
A map of the fort site, which includes health and safety information, can be found on page two.

Arbeia is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Please ask your group to walk on the paths, not along the excavated walls.

Suggested classroom activities

- Download 'A Story of Three Emperors'. Learn about Emperor Septimius Severus and his family, who may have visited Arbeia.
- Borrow a box of replica and authentic Roman objects from Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums. The Boxes of Delight are free of charge. More information can be found at www.exploreyourmuseums.org.uk.

Site Plan



The red shaded areas are not safe for visitors - museum staff only.

Arbeia: general information

What did Arbeia look like?

Arbeia was built on top of a hill next to the River Tyne and the North Sea. This allowed the soldiers based at the fort to see for miles around. A port would have been located nearby.

Arbeia had four gates (north, south, east and west); the west gate has been reconstructed. The height of the gates would allow soldiers to see any potential enemy attacks.

The exterior walls of all Roman forts looked like a playing card (a rectangle with curved edges).

Arbeia wasn't the only Roman presence in ancient South Shields. It was usual for villages to be built outside the forts along Hadrian's Wall; Arbeia was no different.

Hadrian's Wall

Although Arbeia was very important to Hadrian's Wall, the Wall never actually came as far as South Shields. Arbeia was a 'warehouse' for the supplies that would eventually make their way to the soldiers stationed along Hadrian's Wall.

Roman army

Only men were allowed to join the Roman army.

Legionary soldiers (famous for their red tunics and battle formations e.g. tortoise) built the fort, but did **not** live here. Arbeia was garrisoned by auxiliary soldiers who, unlike the legionaries, were not Roman citizens. Soldiers from Gaul were stationed at Arbeia. Later, soldiers from Iraq / Turkey lived at the fort; the name Arbeia means 'Place of the Arabs'.

Once an auxiliary soldier had served 25 years he would be granted Roman citizenship. This privilege was passed onto his children.

What can we see today?

Archaeologists usually only find the foundations of Roman buildings; they rarely find full structures as buildings fall down, or the stone is used to construct other buildings.

The two grassy areas at Arbeia were also part of the fort, but the ancient buildings are still to be excavated. What do you think is hidden beneath the soil?

Granaries

A reconstruction drawing of a granary can be found on page six.

Possible questions to ask your group:

Q: What is a granary?

A: A place where food was stored

Q: The floors were raised by being laid on top of small pillars; why?

A: To keep the grain fresh and to keep animals, such as mice, out.

- Arbeia was a supply base for Hadrian's Wall so at one time there were 22 granaries!
- All the grain for the 16,000 soldiers along the Wall came through Arbeia at some point.
- The large hole located inside the granary close to the reconstructed west gate is a kiln that was built after the granary was demolished.



Headquarters building

A reconstruction drawing of the headquarters can be found on page seven.

Possible questions to ask your group:

Q. The headquarters was the most important building in any Roman fort; why was it built in the centre of the fort?

A. To protect it during attacks - the centre of the fort is the most difficult area to damage / reach.

Q. The strong-room at the back of the headquarters was guarded night and day. What do you think was inside?

A. Money / wages



- In Roman times, this building would have been almost as tall as the reconstructed west gate.
- Arbeia's officers would have gathered in this building each day to listen to the Commanding Officer (the most important man in the fort). He would tell the officers their duties and inform them of the day's password. The officers would pass this information onto the soldiers under their command.
- The two remaining columns were part of the headquarters; they stood in an open air courtyard at the front of the building.
- Above the strong-room was the shrine of the standards. This room contained the standards of the soldiers based at Arbeia.

The Latrine

A reconstruction drawing of the latrine can be found on page eight.

Possible questions to ask your group:

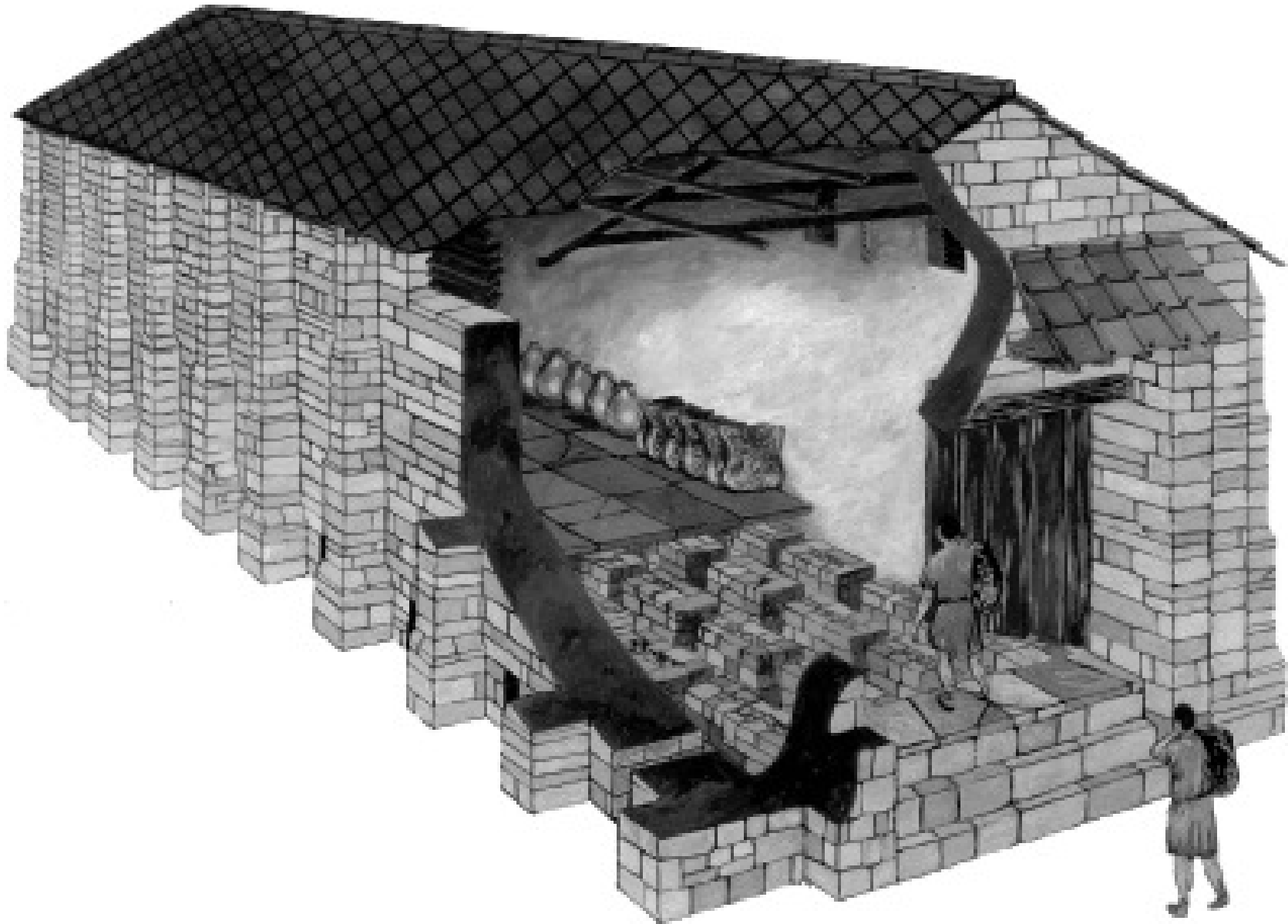
Q: What does 'latrine' mean?

A: Toilet

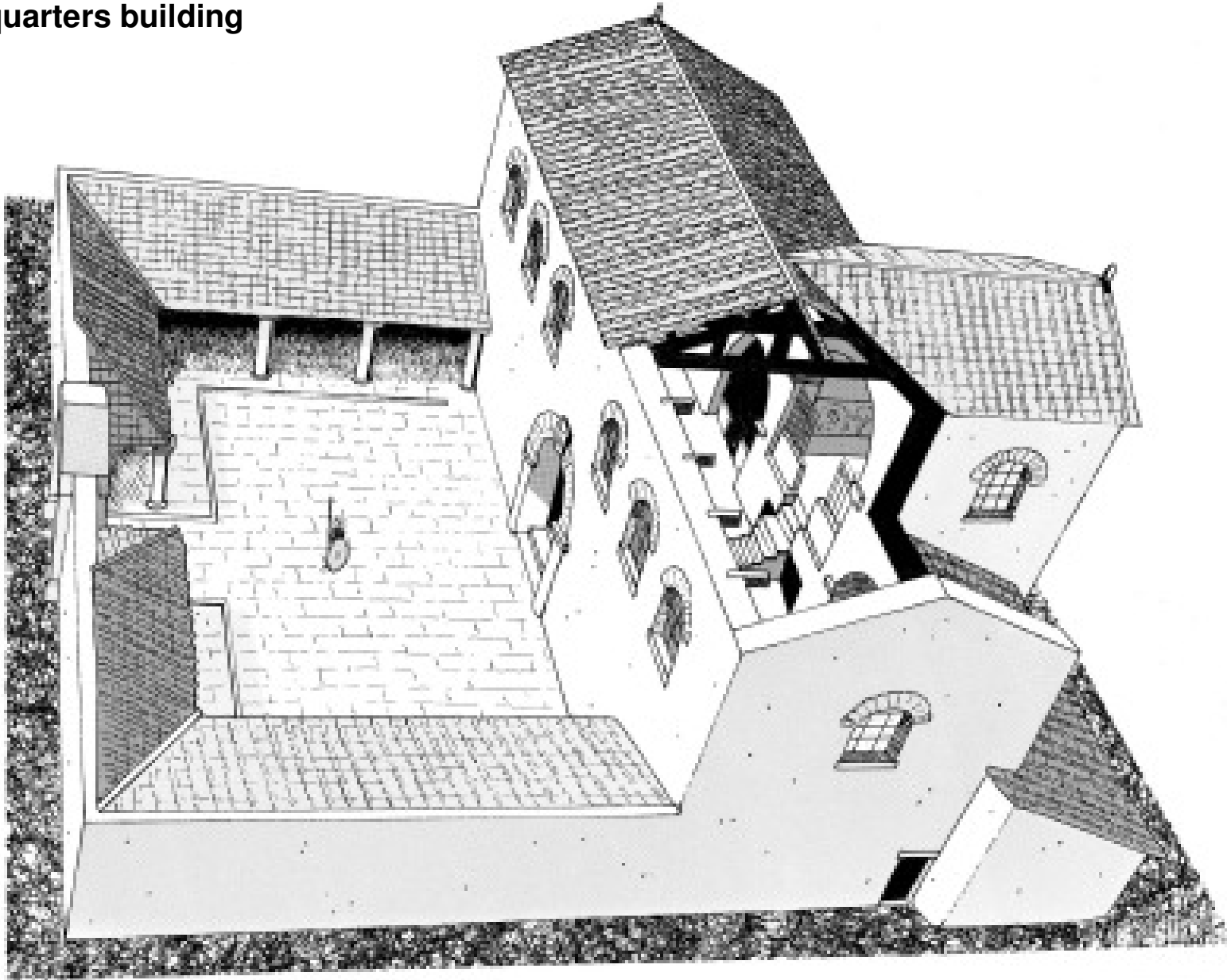


- The latrine contained two wooden benches with several circular holes; these were used as toilet seats.
- There were no walls between each 'seat' so there was no privacy.
- It is thought that the Romans used sponges of sticks to clean themselves after going to the toilet; other archaeologists think that the Romans used moss.
- Open plan, communal toilet blocks were normal practice in Roman times.

Granary



The headquarters building



The latrine

