

A.D.43 – EXHIBITION AT DOVER MUSEUM

24th June – 31st October ————— MERRIL LILLEY

SINCE THE MUSEUM returned to its old, sympathetically rebuilt premises in the Market Square, Doverians have been fortunate to have on their doorstep one of the best exhibition galleries in Kent. The current exhibition, A.D.43, depicts the story of the Roman invasion of Britain, the 350 years of Roman occupation and its effect on the everyday life of the Britons. The attractive display panels are informative and comprehensive and there is a wealth of original material from diverse sources, collected together for this major exhibition; Roman pottery, coins and metalwork from Richborough, a tombstone from Boulogne of a freed slave of a Roman officer serving in the Classis Britannica fleet; replicas of the spectacular grave goods from the burial of an Iron Age warrior found in Deal, restored and copied by the British Museum.

There are, of course, plenty of exhibits, focusing on the Romans in Dover, which serve to remind local residents just how, when and where the Romans occupied the area. There is also interesting evidence of links between Dover and Boulogne in pre-Roman and Roman times, including iron age coins found along this coast and the tombstone from Boulogne.

Around A.D.117 the Roman fleet, the Classis Britannica, began building a fort at Dover, which was occupied, abandoned and re-occupied at various times throughout the second century A.D. The settlement which grew up around the fort may have been as large as five hectares, with a military bathhouse, a mansio, or hotel (the Painted House) and various other structures. In the exhibition, plans pinpointing the location of Roman buildings, a model of the Pharos and numerous locally-discovered artifacts, enable the viewer to conjure up a picture of the town in Roman times. It is almost possible to imagine some of the characters from the Roman tableau in the White Cliffs Experience walking the streets about their everyday affairs.

Congratulations to the Curator and staff of Dover Museum for producing, since the inauguration of the gallery, constantly-changing exhibitions of such a high standard and especially, on this occasion, to Jon Iveson for one of the most memorable and intriguing to date, an absolute MUST for all interested in Roman history and particularly the history of our town.

Our Chairman attended the official opening of this very interesting exhibition and reported accordingly.