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ANTHROSEM

Brewing Beer in Roman Britain

Travis Rupp

**Research & Development Manager and Beer Archaeologist at Avery Brewing Co.
Lecturer in Classics at the University of Colorado, Boulder**



This lecture will explore the production and consumption of beer in Roman occupied Britain from the invasions of Julius Caesar through the end of Roman rule in the 5th century. Beer was the primary drink of early peoples and nations in Britain before Roman arrival. Via regular contact with other major empires and nations, beer styles and brewing methodologies expanded throughout Northern Europe as well. For example, Celtic contact with Britain significantly influenced how they produced beer. Though beer from these regions was often scoffed at and deemed inferior to wine, the “barbarians” of the north were not the only people consuming it. Archaeological and literary evidence supports the mass production of beer for Rome’s legions serving on Hadrian’s Wall. This lecture will survey brewing at Vindolanda, Housesteads, and many other forts from the 1st and 2nd centuries CE. Largescale brewing coincided with the movement of the Roman legions, and new styles and flavors were created as Antoninus Pius pushed further north through the Midlands into Scotland. The construction of his wall promoted more brewing facilities, and the production of beer created a symbiotic relationship between the native brewers and the Roman consumers. These observations are witnessed in other regions of Roman provincial activity; an exploration of Roman castra and brewing facilities from Germanic territories in the late 2nd century CE will act as a comparative case study. This lecture will also present how beer was produced, what ingredients were used, how the beer likely tasted, and what (if any) traditions from the past are alive and well in British beer today.

This lecture is co-sponsored by the Department of Anthropology, the School of Languages and Cultures, the College of Liberal Arts, the Department of Food Science and College of Agriculture, and Lafayette Brewing Company.



Department of Anthropology

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