



Sandwich

Sandwich Guildhall Museum and Archives

Volunteer Favourite: "The Die Is Cast"



Asked what her favourite object is, Moira replied with these thoughts:
"The Die Is Cast"

This famous saying is attributed by Suetonius to Julius Caesar as he crossed the River Rubicon. I always think of it when I look at our own Roman die tucked away in the case of Richborough Fort finds. The numbers are still clearly etched on the bone and it is a gem of a find.

Was it brought over from Italy or another European country? How far has it travelled? Who did it belong to? Did a soldier while away the time on his watch at Richborough gaming with his comrades? Did they gamble with it? Did he lose his wages or maybe a dagger or treasured possession, all on the roll of this die.

If only our die could speak - what fascinating tales it might be able to tell us.”

Maira highlights here how we are so often taken in by the shiny historical big hitters when it comes to museum objects. But sometimes the everyday objects, the personal belongings and paraphernalia that we leave behind are sometimes the items that tell us most about those who lived before us. We often think of Richborough as a stronghold and a military encampment but the settlement was a large one and living on the frontier would have required things like dice games to keep people occupied.

We know nothing about this die, who made it, owned it or how it became littered amongst the other archaeological finds. But as soon as you see it you can identify what it is, imagine it being used and possibly feel better connected to our distant past because it isn't something murky and intangible but actually something very relatable and these everyday objects help us to explore this.