

View of the Vindolanda site where volunteers have been crucial The Vindolanda Trust

The National Lottery has awarded £1.3million to reveal a collection of shoes, wooden pipes and letters.

What makes these seemingly everyday items extraordinary is the fact they are nearly 2,000 years old.

Oxygen-free soil conditions at Vindolanda near Hadrian's Wall have preserved organic material which normally disintegrates over time – leaving behind a unique glimpse into Roman life.

Internationally significant collection

Volunteers have helped to excavate textiles, paper, flora and 1,463 wooden artefacts at the site, including:

- Potters wheels
- Wooden toilet seats
- Thousands of shoes
- Britain's oldest surviving handwritten documents

Alongside the ancient Roman fort, the collection, which is recognised as a national treasure, tells the fascinating everyday story of those who lived and worked on the Northern Frontier nearly 2,000 years ago.

[quote=Patricia Birley, Vindolanda Trust] “Many of these incredible wooden objects... would have remained in storage and unseen without the support of the National Lottery.” [/quote]

Out of storage

National Lottery funding will create a new museum gallery complete with special display cases allowing temperature and humidity to be kept at safe levels, enabling significant pieces of the wooden collection to be taken out of storage and seen by the public for the very first time.

Visitors will also discover the incredible survival story of the collection – from the science behind how they lasted two millennia to their conservation and the research that is uncovering their origins.

Made possible by National Lottery players

Patricia Birley, Chair of the Vindolanda Trust’s Development and Impact Committee, said: “Many of these incredible wooden objects, which include water pipes, building timbers, furniture, barrels and a toilet seat would have remained in storage and unseen without the support of the National Lottery.”

Ivor Crowther, Head of HLF North East, said: “From a collection of wooden Roman artefacts unrivalled in Britain to the science behind its survival, Vindolanda has an incredibly story to tell. Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, we’re delighted to support this project which will secure the future of the site’s wooden underworld and allow the public to discover its secrets for the very first time.”

Construction work is expected to start on site this summer with the new gallery and activity room opening in late Spring 2018.



Ancient toilet seat discovered at Vindolanda The Vindolanda Trust

Vindolanda wooden collection to go on display