



Now look at the article about Roman remains and answer the seven questions that follow.

Roman Remains

During 2004 /5, York Archaeological Trust excavated 80 burials in York, in advance of housing developments. The site was part of a large cemetery on the outskirts of the Roman town, across the river from the legionary fortress.

The burials are dated to between the early 2nd century to the late 3rd century, and probably cover most of the period of Roman occupation in northern England (about AD 70–410). Almost all are male, and the vast majority are adults – not the usual demographics for a Roman cemetery.

However, despite the evidence for a harsh lifestyle and a violent death, these people had been carefully buried. There was also evidence that funerary feasting had taken place at the cemetery; this often occurred on the anniversary of the death of loved ones.

Were these people gladiators, who were both revered (as superstars) and reviled (as associated with death)? Or were they people who had been executed but given a decent burial? How about soldiers who had died in battle? Or was this evidence of a group of people who had unusual views on religion or burial practices?

As Kurt Hunter-Mann, who is leading the research at York Archaeological Trust, explains, there is evidence to support other theories, too. "There are numerous pieces of evidence that point towards or are consistent with the interpretation that the skeletons are Roman gladiators, but there is also other evidence that suggests the individuals could have been soldiers, criminals, or members of a religious cult," he says.

One of the most significant pieces of evidence supporting the 'gladiator' conclusion is a large carnivore bite mark – probably inflicted by a lion, tiger or bear, which archaeologists believe may have been sustained in an arena context.

Other evidence includes a high incidence of substantial arm asymmetry – a feature mentioned in ancient Roman literature in connection with a gladiator; some healed and unhealed weapon injuries; possible hammer blows to the head (a feature attested as a probable gladiatorial *coup de grâce* at another gladiator cemetery at Ephesus in Turkey).

Questions 1–7

Complete the summary using the list of words, A–L, below.

The area was being dug up as part of a new housing development when a 1. _____ burial ground was discovered. Unlike other Roman sites, this one consists mainly of adults and dates to the time of the Roman occupation in the 2. _____ of England. It is not clear who they were but they could have been soldiers who had been killed when 3. _____ or people with different 4. _____ views. Another theory is that they were 5. _____. A large bite found on one of the skeletons, made by some kind of 6. _____, supports this idea. Some 7. _____ suggest that their cause of death was delivered by the victor of a fight.

A animal

D gladiators

G lion

J northern

B religion

E head

H north

K skulls

C fighting

F large

I religious

L battle