

AVENTICUM HER FABULOUS STORY!



3rd floor

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Site et Musée romains d'Avenches

October 2019

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Aventicum: a people, a territory

The story of Aventicum begins a long time before the Roman conquest. In the middle of the 2nd century BCE, it was already a major Gallic urban centre. The local aristocracy minted coins and traded with Mediterranean regions.

In 15 BCE, the territory of the Helvetii, from Lake Geneva to Lake Constance, went under Roman control. Avenches became the capital of the Helvetii and the town quickly expanded. During the 2nd century CE, there were approximately 20,000 people living in Avenches, most of them indigenous.

Amongst the inhabitants were members of the imperial family, such as the father of Vespasian and his son Titus, prominent families, lower class citizens, doctors, traders, craftsmen, free men, freedmen and slaves.

Economic and political troubles marked the end of the 3rd century and large areas of the city were abandoned. However, the city became and remained an episcopal see until the end of the 6th century CE. It survived only as a small-sized settlement in the following centuries. In the 13th century, the “new town” was built on the hilltop.

Gallic origins

Until recently, it was assumed that the city of Aventicum had been created *ex nihilo* soon after 15 BCE, when the Helvetii territory was integrated into the Roman Empire.

Over the past few years, discoveries of Celtic remains west and south of the hill of Avenches have brought to light that a large urban centre already existed in the second half of the 2nd century BCE. Residential, economic and religious quarters were built on both sides of a south-west/north-west axis: it will later become the main street of the Roman town (*decumanus maximus*).

With the discovery of luxurious furniture, goods imported from the Mediterranean, as well as evidence of coin minting, the image of a major and prosperous centre emerges.





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1 Lady wearing a torc

Limestone bust depicting a local woman found in a house located north of the town (*insula* 10 east). While her hairstyle is Roman, her thick coat and torc are Gaulish. Only members of the elite wore torcs. In ancient texts, it is described as an iconic Celtic object. This sculpture was manufactured by a local workshop in the first half of the 1st century CE. It was probably placed in a niche.

2 Set of pottery from Sur Fourches

This set of pottery comes from the Sur Fourches quarter, south-west of Avenches. Recent discoveries in that area have revealed the existence of many remains of the pre-Roman town.

The pottery set dates back to the La Tène D1 period (150–80 BCE). It was found in a small semi-basement used as a cellar. The room measured 6 m² and was fitted with a wooden floor. Approximately twenty pottery vessels were left there. It is presumed that they were used to store food. This set includes fine grey ware bottles and bowls as well as two spool-shaped artefacts. The vessels were crushed during a fire that burnt down the house.

3 Wooden carding brush

Semi-oval oak wood carding brush with handle. One to four plum tree thorns were inserted into each hole of the brush.

This object was found in a channel fill from the Latenian period, close to La Brocante.

4 Gaulish pit deposit

In 2016, structures from the Gaulish period were discovered during the extension of the Sous-Ville collège. Amongst the remains excavated, ten pits were found filled with objects that had been deposited intentionally. Some of the objects were intact. These pits were possibly dug in an area enclosed by a fence. The deliberate burial of items is linked to religious practices.

In one of the pits, archaeologists discovered a painted ceramic bottle surrounded by metal objects used for grooming, transport and cooking: a razor, a bronze bracelet fragment, a fibula, a terret ring, an iron cauldron handle, a coin, as well as various objects made of iron and bronze.

These pits are dated to around 100–80 BCE, like the other remains discovered in the Sur Fourches area.

5 Bronze terret rings

Terret rings were used to secure and guide the reins of horses pulling carts. They were attached to the horse's harness. The artefacts presented here belong to the fittings of two Celtic chariots. The first set is composed of four pieces: the rings have an oval loop and a long rectangular bar used to affix them to the harness. This type of ring is common. However, the second set, composed of four winged terret rings is unique. The top button of the rings is decorated with red enamel, of which only scarce traces remain.

The eight terret rings were discovered in a small pit in Sur Fourches and can be dated between the end of the 2nd and the beginning of the 1st century BCE.

6 Celtic coins

Over the last few years, a large number of Celtic coins have been brought to light in Avenches. More than two hundred pieces were collected between 2014 and 2019, multiplying their total number by five.

All seventeen coins presented here were discovered between 2016 and 2017 in the Sur Fourches area. They consist mostly of silver *quinarii* and potin coins dated between the end of the 3rd century and the end of the 1st century BCE. Unknown types of coinage as well as two Padane drachmas produced in northern Italy (3rd century and 150 - 140 BCE) were found amongst them.

7 Coin die

This coin die was found close to the theatre and used for the production of Celtic gold coins (staters). Two dies were necessary to produce a coin: one obverse and one reverse. The obverse die was fixed to an anvil, a heavy piece of wood or metal. The reverse was held by hand and brought down on the flan under a heavy hammer. Both dies were engraved, thus transferring motifs to each side of the coin.

The die found in Avenches is made of iron while the motif is made of bronze. It was used to struck the obverse of a stater with a wheel design, in imitation of the Greek designs found on Philip II of Macedon's staters. Wheel staters were produced in eastern Gaul between the end of the 2nd century and the beginning of the 1st century BCE. This exceptional discovery confirms that coins were minted in Avenches towards the end of the Iron Age.

8 Coin flan

This silver coin flan (metal disk) would have been struck between obverse and reverse dies to stamp motifs on each side of the coin. Flans are usually produced using flan trays (cf. 9).

Celtic silver coins (*quinarii*) were struck on this type of flan. It was found in the Sur Fourches area in a 1st century BCE pit, where a fragment of flan tray was also brought to light (cf. 9). However, the latter was not used to produce this particular silver flan.

9 Flan tray

Fragment of a flan tray used for the production of metal flans (coins were struck on flans). The terra-cotta tray was dimpled with recesses of identical size and shape. As the value of a coin was measured by its weight, size, and metallurgical composition, each recess had to be exactly the same in order to produce identical flans. The mould was probably broken to extract the flans.

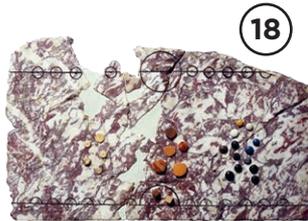
This tray comes from a Latenian pit discovered in the Sur Fourches area in 2004. A silver flan was also found there (cf. 8). Both are exceptional testimonies of the production of Gaulish coins in Avenches.

The Roman period: childhood

Artefacts related to childhood are often found in funerary contexts. In Antiquity, infant mortality was very high and half of the children would not reach the age of five years old. Baby bottles, statuettes and toys were often placed in the grave next to the child. A stela could mark the grave and bear an inscription expressing the parents' grief and love.

Other objects can recall the children's daily life, such as statuettes or sculptures, game pieces (tokens, game boards, knucklebones), or even a footprint left by a small child running over a drying tile.





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10 Marble head of a child (Amor)

Marble head of a small child. The sculpture probably depicts Amor, the son of Venus. His lovely curly hair is braided into a bun.

This very fine sculpture, dated to the middle of the 1st century CE, was probably produced in an Italian workshop close to Rome.

11 Marble head of a young girl

Carrara (Luni) marble head of a young girl. She appears to be smiling and wears the so-called “melon” hairstyle. The absence of individual features indicates that this is not a portrait.

This fine sculpture was made in an Italian workshop around the middle of the 1st century CE. It was probably part of a life-size statue featuring a child holding a small animal or a toy in her hands.

12 Limestone head of a young girl

Jura limestone sculpture, dated to the middle of the 1st century CE. This local production was inspired by the Luni marble head of a young girl (cf. 11). The girl wears the same “melon” hairstyle and presents similar facial features. Like the other marble head, this one belonged to a life-size statue.

13 Terracotta tile with the footprint of a child

This square tile measures 20 cm on each side. It belonged to an underfloor heating system (hypocaust). Discovered in the *insula* 7, close to the Derrière la Tour Palace, it bears the print of a child’s right foot. The child accidentally walked on the tile while it was laid out to dry, perhaps in one of the known workshops in Avenches (north-east of the town and at En Chaplix). Animal footprints are often found on tiles, but human footprints are very rare, especially children’s.

14 Dea Nutrix, Gallo-Roman nursing goddess

Moulded white pipeclay statuette, probably manufactured in the Allier Valley in central Gaul.

Dea Nutrix is seated in a wicker chair and holds two swaddled infants at her breast. The mother goddess appears frequently in Gallo-Roman iconography. She symbolises maternity and prosperity. Statuettes like this one are found in cemeteries, houses and spring sanctuaries. The statuette of Avenches was discovered in a building close to the forum. Dea Nutrix, together with the household Lares, protected children and family in general.

15 Terracotta statuette depicting a couple

Terracotta statuette discovered in a grave with the cremated remains of a child aged between 2 and 4 years old, together with a balsamarium in the shape of a rabbit. Dated between 40 – 70 CE, the bones were buried in the A la Montagne necropolis.

A couple stands side by side holding hands. The woman, on the right, wears a chignon. The surface was badly damaged during the cremation. A few lines mark out the couple's stylised faces and clothes. The hole between the heads, intentionally enlarged, shows that the object was hung. The place of production of this type of statuette has not been clearly identified. It may have been manufactured in ceramic workshops in southern Gaul, a place also renowned for the production of statuettes.

It could be a toy or the representation of the child's parents accompanying him to the world of the dead.

16 Roman ceramic feeding bottle

This type of breast-shaped vessel, fitted with a circular opening at the top and a pouring spout on the body, is generally identified as a feeding bottle. A soft teat (from cloth or a cow's teat) was probably added to the spout to ease nursing. Feeding bottles have been repeatedly found in graves of newborn infants. They accompany the baby in the afterlife, offering a last meal or a reminder of its daily life.

This artefact, dated to the 2nd or 3rd century CE, was discovered in 1888 at the West Gate cemetery.

17 Funerary stele of Visellia

*D(is)M(anibus) s(acrum)/ Viselliae Firmae/
Visel(lius) Firminus et/ Iulia Secunda parente[s]/
infe(llicissimi) vix(it) an(no)/ dieb(us) L.*

Dedicated to the Manes of Visellia Firma Visellius Firminus and Iulia Secunda, her grieving parents (set up this monument). She lived one year and 50 days.

The funerary limestone stele was uncovered in the En Chaplix cemetery. The expression of grief of the parents is exceptional in this case, as the baby girl was just one year old. Infant mortality was very high then following birth and during the first month of life, and the death of a young child was common in most families, whether rich or poor.

In the En Chaplix cemetery, several graves of children who died at the same age as Visellia have been found. The babies were buried in coffins with rich goods, showing the family's attachment to their child.

18 Marble game board

Marble game board imported from Greece, found in the residential area next to the forum.

The incised lines and circles indicate that the game of twelve lines or twelve markings (*ludus duodecim scriptorum* or *XII Scripta*) was played on this board. For this game, three rows of twelve columns were needed; the third row is not preserved here.

Very popular in the Roman world, two people played this game, moving their pieces (generally made of glass or bone) across the board using dice (made of bone, ivory or metal) to stop their opponent.

19 Knucklebones (*tali*)

Knucklebone pieces were made from the knucklebones of sheep. In Antiquity, they were used for various games of skill or chance.

Skill games were popular amongst children and teenagers. In the game “five stones” (*penthe litha*), the player had to throw the knucklebones in the air and catch them with the back of his hand.

Knucklebones were used by adults as dice in games of chance and for gambling. Each side represented a different numerical value (1, 3, 4, 6°). The “dog throw”, with four 1s, gave the lowest score. The “Venus (or Aphrodite) throw”, where each bone landed on a different side, gave the highest score.

20 Terracotta doll

The small terracotta object, roughly representing the lower part of a body, was discovered in the En Saint-Martin area, a residential quarter south-west of the Roman town.

This figurine could be a terracotta doll. Other examples in bone, ivory, terracotta or wood are known. Some dolls were articulated.

21 Intaglio picturing Cupid playing with knucklebones

Onyx intaglio (a semi-precious gemstone) showing Cupid playing with knucklebones. The winged god can be seen crouching with three knucklebones laid in front of his foot and a fourth one thrown in the air next to his open hand.

Intaglios, chiefly made from stone or glass, can be mounted on jewels (like rings for example) and can function as seals. The design is engraved in reverse so that once impressed, they can be read correctly. This explains why the player appears left-handed here. The bichrome nature of the stone was exploited so that the white layer would frame the scene. The intaglio takes the shape of an eye, a symbol against bad luck. This gemstone could have been worn as a good-luck charm, maybe a gift to a loved one.

The Roman period: the people

The majority of those living in Aventicum left very tenuous traces of their existence. Modest citizens, traders and craftsmen, free men, freedmen or slaves, are only known through some rare inscriptions. Their presence is acknowledged by the traces different trades left in the city and the discovery of tools and workshops where various goods were manufactured (glass, bronze, carpentry, milling, tiles, pottery, mosaics, etc.). A few organic remains (wood, leather, etc.), such as shoes or baskets are exceptionally preserved thanks to the humidity of the subsoil. These, as well as graffiti scratched on the painted walls of a house, shed some light on the daily life of the inhabitants of the city.





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22 Wood post from the city wall of Aventicum

In several sectors of the town of Aventicum, the subsoil was unstable. Swamplands and floods covered the north-west part of the city (today close to the train station and the industrial area). To stabilize buildings constructed on the wet subsoil, the Romans drove many oak piles under the buildings' foundations. This was the case for the northern part of the city wall, built on more than 100,000 oak posts felled between 72 and 77 CE, as dendrochronology (tree-ring dating) has revealed.

23 Carpenter's grave

This grave comes from the harbour cemetery, where mostly working-class men were buried. The majority must have been harbour and canal workers.

The grave goods discovered with this man buried between 100 and 120 CE enable us to identify his profession. After cremation, his ashes were placed in a wooden box - only the metal ornaments remain - with his work tools, the tools of a naval carpenter: a saw (folded in two), an adze (a cutting tool for smoothing or carving wood) and shears (spring scissors). Fragments of 25 ceramic vases were also placed in the box, plus a glass pearl and a coin. These were burnt with the deceased on the pyre.

24 Iron punch

This punch is composed of two articulated elements attached together by a rivet. It was used to mark a design from the back into metal. The lower part must have been fixed into a block of wood.

Uncovered in Avenches (En Perruet), this fine tool was used to trace on narrow metal bands a motif consisting of three concentric circles, each 4 mm in diameter. The craftsman could then produce an ornament in relief using the repoussé technique. The bronze applique fragment (cf. 25) was most certainly produced using a similar stamp.

25 Embossed bronze applique

Embossed bronze applique found in the En Chaplix sanctuary deposit. A punch was used to emboss this decorative motif. This tool is very similar to the one discovered at En Perruet (cf. 24).

26 Graffiti from *insula* 1

A yellow background wall painting (end of the 1st century/beginning of the 2nd century CE) decorated the walls of a house situated in the north-west area of the city (*insula* 1). Many graffiti were inscribed on the painting. Words and drawings were incised on the walls of this room, which may have been used as a classroom.

The graffiti presented here depicts a hunting scene in which two deer are driven towards the hunter. The first animal, bearing large antlers, is followed by a second animal of which only the head and antlers can be seen on the left of the fragment. On the right, a human figure composed of a large round head and a triangular body has been drawn. This graffiti could recall a hunt staged in the town amphitheatre.

27 Leather shoe sole with nails

This left cow-leather sole, measuring 25 cm long, was uncovered in the En Chaplix canal fill. It is the bottom part of the shoe that touches the ground. 130 nails held three layers of leather together that protected the shoe and improved its grip. Some nails were placed in a row on the edge of the sole, while others were used to create a volute pattern.

28 Wood sandals

Wood sandals measuring 26 cm long and dating to the last quarter of the 4th century CE. These Roman sandals made of wooden soles and leather straps are called *soleae*. They were discovered in the wooden coffin of an adult at the Sur Fourches (West Gate) cemetery.

29 Wicker basket

Woven wicker basket found at the bottom of the canal, built in the 2nd century CE between the harbour and the Roman North-East road. The plant fibres survived due to a wet environment. An analysis of these fibers established that the basket was made of white willow (*salix alba*).

Basketry was very popular in Antiquity. Indeed, it was a cheap material that could be used to produce all kind of objects, such as fruit baskets, chairs or fish baskets. Although basketry was widely used, few examples remain because specific conditions are required for the preservation of basketwork objects (dry or wet environments).

30 Dedication to the goddess Anechtlomara

Anextlomarae/ et Aug(usto)/ Public(ius) Aunus.

To Anechtlomara and the emperor. Publicius Aunus (set up this monument).

Dedication to a goddess whose name means “strong protector” and to Augustus, the title used by Roman emperors. The Celts associated Anechtlomara with Apollo. This joined an imperial and local cult together.

Publicius Aunus’s name reflects that he had been a public slave. Aunus is a Celtic name. Public slaves usually worked as subordinated officials. He was later freed.

This inscription was discovered in an area between the *insulae* 14 and 15, residential and artisan quarters. This inscription asserts a freedman’s private devotion to the Empire.

31 Bronze bust of a deity

Bronze bust probably depicting a deity. This nude bust has been identified as Venus or a Celtic equivalent. However, we should not exclude the possibility that it may be a male deity.

The stylistic treatment of the bust indicates a provincial interpretation of Greco-Roman models: the formal frontality, the features reduced to a simple outline and a flat head.

Four rivets inserted in the bottom of the bust suggest that it was placed on a socle.

The Roman period: the elite

Several prominent families lived in this region: the Camilli, an old Helvetian aristocratic family who adopted Roman customs at an early stage, the Otacilii or the Macrii. Their members often occupied the highest ranks of Roman society and formed the local elite. Known through inscriptions, these families held most local high offices whether legislative (decurions), executive (*duoviri*, high magistrates acting as mayors), judicial or religious.

The discovery of numerous luxury goods – jewellery, metal tableware, bronze beds, marble sculptures or exotic food – as well as magnificent homes, testify to the high standard of living of the wealthier citizens and to the exchange of goods on a very large scale.





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CVALERCEFALD
MILLOQVOIPVBLIC
FVNVS HAEDVORVM
CIVITAS EHEIVET DECR
VERVNI ET CIVITAS HELVET
QVAPACATIMOVAPVBLIC
STATVVS DECREVIT
HA CIVILICAM HELVESTILLA
EX TESTAMENTO



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32 Portrait of a man

This limestone portrait belonged to the sculpted decoration of one of the two mausoleums, exceptional for their height, that stood about 1 km from the centre of the ancient town at En Chaplix. Three full-length statues were placed in the upper part of each monument, depicting the deceased surrounded by two figures, probably relatives.

This portrait of a man wearing a toga stood in the upper part of the south monument, to the right of the deceased. It was built around 45 CE. The man wore a metal crown of which only the fixation holes remain.

Without an inscription, the identities of the deceased and their relatives remain a mystery. They must have been powerful men, probably members of the early Romanised local aristocracy, belonging to the generation of the founders of the city. They could have been members of the powerful Helvetian family called the Camilli.

33 Dates and so-called “date amphora”

Smaller than olive oil, wine or fish-sauce amphorae, this amphora was used to transport expensive goods. In Avenches, a similar amphora was found in 1873, still filled with dates imported from the Eastern Mediterranean. This artefact testifies the extent to which Roman trade provided wealthy citizens with rare and exotic goods.

34 Dedication in honour of Caius Valerius Camillus

*C(aio) Valer(io) C(ai) f(ilio) Fab(ia) Ca/ millio
quoi publice/ funus Haeduum/ civitas et
Helvet(i) decre/ verunt et civitas/ Helvet(iorum)
qua pagatim qua publice/ statuas decrevit/
I[u]lia C(ai) Iuli Camilli f(ilia) Festilla/
ex testamento.*

To Caius Valerius Camillus, son of Caius, of the Fabia tribe, for whom the city of the Aedui and the Helvetii decreed that he should be buried with a public funeral; moreover, statues were dedicated to him by the city of the Helvetii, either in the name of each *pagus*, or in the name of the entire city. Iulia Festilla, daughter of Caius Iulius Camillus (set up this inscription) according to the provisions of the will.

Marble inscription discovered in 1809 in the thermal baths of En Perruet, close to the forum.

Caius Valerius Camillus belonged to the local nobility that received Roman citizenship as early as the first decades of the 1st century CE. The members of the Camilli family, known through several inscriptions, pursued either military, political or religious careers.

Valerius Camillus is no exception, as his memory is publicly honoured by two tribes: the Helvetii and the Aedui. The Aedui's territory extended from what would later be the region of Burgundy to Lyon. Their capital was Autun.

In this inscription, Avenches is called a *civitas* and not a colony. This means that the text was engraved before the foundation of the colony, around 70 CE, and was probably first placed on the forum before being presented in the thermal baths, where several monuments honouring the Camilli were brought.

35 Globular glass jar

This olive green globular jar is decorated with vertical ribs. This type of vessel was produced in large quantities in Germania and Gallia Belgica where workshops were active.

They were used for storage on a daily basis but were also frequently deposited in graves: this object became a cinerary urn and was placed in a grave in the En Chaplix cemetery in the middle of the 2nd century CE.

36 Cylindrical glass bottle

This glass bottle was discovered in a child's tomb located in the En Chaplix cemetery, where it was deposited as a grave good around the middle of the 2nd century CE. This type of vessel was used as tableware. Its blue and green hues are natural colours of glass produced in Antiquity. Roman glassmakers would add, for example, manganese or antimony oxides to obtain colourless glass, or cobalt oxides to produce blue glass.

37 Globular glass bottle

On this pale green globular bottle, fine trails of molten glass have been wound in spirals around the neck. This technique was widely used in Antiquity. The delicacy and degree of preservation of this artefact are remarkable. It was discovered in a grave burial in the En Chaplix cemetery (from 150 CE).

38 Square glass bottle

Very popular in the Roman world and typical of Roman glassware, square bottles were produced in various sizes. Goods were transported and stored in the bigger and more resistant bottles, while the smaller ones were used to serve drinks during meals.

This small bottle was placed in a grave burial located in the West Gate cemetery and dated from the end of the 1st century CE.

39 Bronze *authepsa*

Authepsae, or samovars, are luxury items and were rare in Antiquity. To this day, only three have been discovered in Switzerland. They were designed to heat water (or other liquids) and to keep it warm for washing or cooking.

This *authepsa* has a spout with a strainer and a long neck. Inside it, a metal pipe is filled with embers through an opening at the top in order to heat the water in the surrounding container. It stands on a high circular base pierced with holes to allow the ashes to fall out.

This item was discovered in 1910 at Champs Baccon, a residential area in the Roman period.

40 Bronze dish

Bronze dish (*catinus*), used as a serving dish, with a flat rim decorated with two parallel lines. Tableware made of costly materials, like bronze, were considered as luxury items in Antiquity. Similar types of tableware were made of less costly materials, such as ceramic, glass or wood. However, metal has the advantage of being light, resistant and possessing excellent thermal conductivity.

This object was found in 1838 near the forum.

41 Bronze bucket

Bronze bucket, *situla* in Latin, dated to the middle of the 1st century CE. It was discovered in 1906 in Aux Joncs in a well that was probably part of the installations of the harbour of Aventicum. This type of container was used to draw water or to serve drinks.

The object on display is very small compared to other buckets or *situlae*. Its handle attachments are decorated with two satyr heads capped by a ring to which the handle is attached.

42 Bronze jug handle

Jug handle dated to the beginning of the 1st century CE, discovered close to the theatre at the end of the 19th century. A floral pattern decorates the top part. It is framed on each side by a rosette and capped by two swan heads clasped to the jug rim. A small winged cupid carrying a goat-skin flask is depicted on the bottom part of the handle; on his right, a vessel stands on an altar. The handle was probably attached to a jug for serving wine or for pouring water for washing.

43 Gold and blue glass bead necklace

This golden thread necklace with globular dark blue glass beads was discovered at the En Chaplix cemetery in 1988. Each chain link is made of a gold thread bent to form an eyelet at each end. The links are decorated with a glass bead. Thirty-three beads, whole or fragmentary, were preserved of the fifty that composed the original object. A small fragment of a similar necklace, with only three beads, was uncovered in the theatre in 1892.

44 Gold earrings

Pair of gold earrings from the cremation urn of a woman. Discovered at the En Chaplix cemetery, the glass urn was dated to around 125 CE. A pearl or a precious gemstone surrounded by an oval frame would have been the main feature of these earrings.

45 Intaglio ring depicting a muse

Gold and onyx ring dated to the 1st century CE, depicting a muse standing in profile. She wears a *chiton* and holds a lyre in her hands. She leans against a column on which stands a small cupid. The woman can be identified as Erato, the muse of lyric and wedding poetry. She is often represented with Cupid. Onyx is a semi-precious gemstone, mainly composed of silica. Onyx was considered by the Romans as an ideal material for making intaglios. They imported it from India, Iran and North Africa.

46 Gold ring or bracelet from a statuette

The archaeological discovery context of this ring was not recorded. It was found at Derrière les Murs, north of the city wall of Aventicum. Therefore, we cannot ascertain whether it belongs to the Roman period. If it did, it would have been either a ring or a bracelet worn by a statuette. Simple Roman gold bands were generally wider. Bracelets placed on statuettes are well-known and documented.

47 Intaglio ring depicting two cupids

Silver ring from the 2nd century CE, set with a glass imitation of nicolo, a semi-precious gemstone. The intaglio depicts two cupids facing each other and holding hands.

The scene represents the fight of Eros (love) against his brother Anteros (counter love). They personify both good and bad sides of love: one leading to happiness, the other to destruction. Anteros was also the god of requited love and the avenger of the unrequited.

48 Silver rings with two snake heads

Engraved silver rings with two facing snake heads. The ring with the bead between the snake heads fell into the En Chaplix canal, while the other ring was discovered in a building of the *insula* 16.

This type of ring is very common. It originated in Etruscan and Alexandrian art and spread across the Empire in the 1st century BCE. Numerous bracelets and rings take the form of a snake, commonly associated with the underworld. The snake, an attribute of the god of medicine Aesculapius, symbolises health and life. Snake jewellery could thus be worn as a good-luck charm against evil spirits.

49 Hoard of *aurei*

Three *aurei* bearing the image of the emperor Augustus discovered between the city wall and Villarepos and purchased by the Roman Museum in 1895.

The *aureus*, a gold coin that carried the highest value in the Roman monetary system, was worth 25 *denarii* (silver coins) at the start of the Empire. A legionary received 9 *aurei* a year. The value of these in Avenches would thus be of one third of the annual salary of a simple soldier. Buried in the ground, the coins were never recovered by their owner.

Issued between 32 and 18 BCE, they are three rare types of *aurei* minted in Italy and Hispania.

50 Marble dog sleeping

Marble sculpture depicting a dog curled up and sleeping, found “close to the cemetery” in 1869, a residential quarter in the Roman period. The top of its head is worn out. Water probably ran out of the hole at the base of its muzzle. This object could thus have belonged to a fountain placed in the garden of a rich household.

51 Inscription of the Otacilii

*Q(uinto) Otacil[io] Quir(ina tribu) Pollino,
Q(uinti) Otacil[ii]/ Ceriali[s] filio, omnibus
honor[i]bus/ apud suos functo, ter
immunit[ate]/ a diuo [H]adr[ian(o)] donato,
inquis[it]or(i)/ II[I Gall]iar(um), pa[tr]o no
uenal(iciorum) [corporis]/ Cisal[p]ino[rum] et
Transalpinorum/ item [n]autar(um) Ar[ari]-
cor(um) [Rho]danicor(um)/ ob [e]g[re]gia eius
erga re[m pub]l(icam) erga(ue)/ sin[gu]los
un[i]uerso[squ]e mer[i]ta/ Helu[etii] publ(ice)
p[atr]ono [-3-5]e[r]is et/ [inscr]ibti[onib(us)]
qu[e..9-10..] e su[n]t.*

To Quintus Otacilius Pollinus, of the tribe Quirina, son of Quintus Otacilius Cerialis, who had performed all the offices amongst his own people, who was granted immunity from taxation three times by the divine Hadrian, to the *inquisitor* (responsible of finances) of the Council of the Three Gauls, to the patron of

the corporation of the slave-dealers, to the patron of the corporation of the *Cisalpini* and *Transalpini*, to the patron of the corporation of the shippers of the Rhône and the Saône, in recognition of his exceptional merits towards the *res publica* (of Avenches) as well as towards individuals and the community, the Helvetii (set up this monument) to their patron by public decree---and by inscriptions---

Limestone inscription in honour of Quintus Otacilius Pollinus, discovered next to the forum.

Q. Otacilius Pollinus was, undoubtedly, the preeminent member of the Otacilii family in the 2nd century CE. The largest inscription found in Avenches (3×6 m) was dedicated to him. Patron of the slave dealers and of two important commercial corporations, he was elected responsible of the finances of the Three Gauls in Lyon. The emperor Hadrian, whom he must have personally known, granted him immunity from taxation three times.

The Otacilii family, presumably of Italian origin, is mentioned on several inscriptions in Avenches. Its members held most of the important political and religious functions in the city. It is most likely that they financed the building of public monuments. In the 2nd century CE, one of the Otacilii may have been the proprietor of the Derrière la Tour Palace.

52 Luxurious bronze bed

Many fragments belonging to luxurious bronze beds were uncovered in one of the dining rooms (*triclinium*) of the Derrière la Tour Palace. These magnificent beds, amongst the most extraordinary discoveries made in Avenches, were manufactured on the Greek island of Delos in the 1st century BCE and were destroyed by a fire in the Palace at the end of the 2nd century CE. They were viewed as antiquities by the Romans themselves. The beds found in Avenches are characterised by the silver and copper sheets that were used to create a rich damascened decoration, as well as by the presence of Greek letters placed to ease the assembling of the bed parts. The bed frame was in wood and the bed base was made of thin wooden slats or leather straps. A mattress covered with bed sheets and pillows was then placed over it.

53 Marble urn lid

This sculpture, of which two fragments have survived, was discovered in the 19th century close to a modern cemetery. It has been identified as the lid of a child's funerary urn.

The child, sleeping with his quiver and bow, could be identified as Cupid. However, the lion between his arms and the possible poppy-stem under his left hand are the attributes of Somnus, the god of sleep.

In the Roman world, the representation of Somnus often refers to the eternal sleep of the deceased. Some Roman myths conveyed the idea of an afterlife. The lizard, placed in front of the child's legs, supports this interpretation. Lizards are seen as a symbol of death and rebirth, as they hibernate during winter.

54 Glass urn containing bones

Contrary to most glass bottles found in a domestic context, this object was originally manufactured as a cinerary urn. This globular glass bottle featuring two handles was discovered in the En Chaplix cemetery, north-east of the town. The urn still contains the burnt bones of the deceased, which were ritually cleaned. The bones and grave goods, comprising of coins and a silver pendant, were placed in the bottle around 125 – 130 CE.

Late Antiquity

The city of Aventicum suffered a decline during the 3rd century, a troubled period resulting from economic inflation and depression, and increasing pressure on the borders of the Empire by the Germanic peoples. The town shrank as the inhabitants moved to the area south of the hill of Avenches and to the area close to the theatre, deserting the rest of the city. At the beginning of the 4th century, some of them became Christians, as shown by the artefacts found in the grave of a young girl.

Despite all this, Aventicum became an episcopal see at the beginning of the 6th century and remained as such until its definitive transfer to Lausanne at the end of that century. If remains of that period are rare, the discovery of luxurious objects and ornaments testify to the wealth of some of its inhabitants.





55 Marble pilaster

These elements of white marble pilasters were discovered north-east of the theatre in 1823. Finely executed, they are dated between the 5th and the 6th centuries CE.

The first curator of the Roman Museum of Avenches, François-Rodolphe de Dompierre, was present at the time of its discovery. He wrote that this pilaster would have been a decorative element of a luxurious building south of the town, where pilasters were placed on a yellow background fresco. The function of this building remains unknown: was it the house of a wealthy proprietor or the residence of the bishop? Nevertheless, these elements show that there still were some prestigious buildings in Avenches in the 5th and 6th centuries CE.



56 Burial of a young Christian girl

Grave dated to the 4th century CE, discovered in 1872 at the West Gate cemetery.

The remains of a young girl, placed in a coffin carved in an oak trunk, were accompanied by rich grave goods: a glass and jet bead necklace, a jet bracelet, a partially silver-plated bronze spoon, a ceramic cup, a bronze jug, a soapstone goblet, a glass bottle, as well as two glass goblets decorated with blue pastilles.

Each glass goblet bears the inscription: *VIVAS IN DEO* (Live in God) and [...]*ZE*[...], probably *PIE ZESSES* (Drink and may you live). The latter is a Greek inscription in the Latin alphabet.

In Antiquity, goblets inscribed with such toasting formulae were given or used during banquets. The goblets found in a Christian context often bear an inscription. They are amongst the earliest testimonies to the spread of Christianity in Switzerland. They expressed hope for life after death.

