

BNS Museum Student Placement 2023 – Jennifer Webster



Hello! My name is Jennifer Webster, and I was selected to undertake this year's BNS Student Placement in the British Museum's Coins and Medals department. Having very recently completed a masters degree in Information Management and Preservation (Archiving/Digital), I felt that this placement would be the perfect way to end my education and launch into the exciting world of heritage. I can honestly say that I was over the moon when I received it!

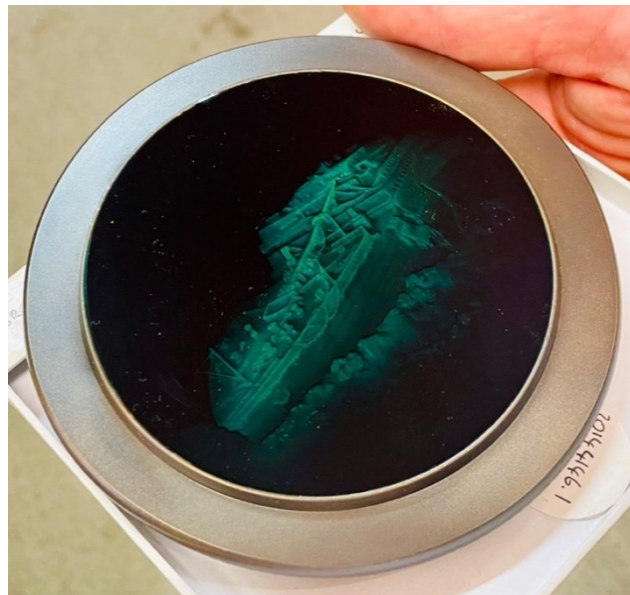
First and foremost, I would like to thank the BNS for this wonderful opportunity – I have learned such a lot over my two weeks of working in the museum, particularly with regards to ancient coinage. I would also like to thank the two people that I worked most closely with, who both ensured the success of my stay. The first is my supervisor for the placement, Dr Eleanor Ghey (Curator of Iron Age and Roman Coin Hoards), who took the time to help me expand my numismatic knowledge and gain experience of the inner workings of the museum. The second is Dr Amelia Dowler (Curator of Greek and Roman Provincial Coins), who provided me with insight into the archival sphere within the museum. Both were so kind and patient, and I really enjoyed working alongside them.

Over my fortnight in the Coins and Medals department, I was set two main tasks – the first involved a hoard of ‘barbarous’ radiate roman coins (which I had never heard of before), from which I gathered and catalogued important metadata for their individual identification. Eleanor explained to me that the title ‘radiate’ indicated that the portrait of the emperor on the obverse was wearing a crown with spikes, as opposed to laureate (the emperor wearing a laurel wreath) or diademed (the emperor wearing a pearl/variation of a diadem). This knowledge was added to the following week, with Eleanor helping me to identify individual coins within a hoard of silver denarii according to emperor and legend.

The second task included sorting, box-listing and digitising a collection of numismatic archival materials and coin impressions relating closely to the famous numismatist John Evans, as well as his social circle of other avid collectors. Evans became famous for his work with Iron-Age coinage, and through handling and observing this kind of coin up close (silver/billion/bronze staters), I learned how to identify specific motifs on the obverse and reverse such as a disjointed horse, wreath and hair-bar.



Alongside these two main tasks, I was given the chance to see many unique coins, medals and archival documents, including those belonging to the departmental numismatic archive. From among the coins, my particular favourites were the chunky Macedonian silver tetradrachms, which (upon handling) felt like holding miniature works of art. From among the medals, I was allowed to handle an exquisite bronze and enamel medal detailing the wreck of the Titanic, produced by the sculptor Paul Huybrechts in 2014.



All in all, I had an absolutely wonderful experience and have learned a great deal during my time on the BNS placement – I know that this adventure will stand me in good stead for whatever comes my way in the future.