



The Silchester Eagle  
(Museum object no 1995.4.1)

This cast bronze figure of an eagle was found in the Basilica of the Roman town of Calleva, near Silchester, on the 9th October 1866 during excavations being undertaken by Rev. J.G.Joyce.

The bird is posed with its wings outstretched, its head raised and turned to the right. The original wings are missing but it is clear, from the careful modeling of the feathers beneath them, that they must have been extended and raised. In 1962 Jocelyn Toynbee described the eagle as 'by far the most superbly naturalistic rendering of any bird or beast as yet yielded by Roman Britain'.

It was repaired during its lifetime when new wings and probably new feet were fitted. Later it lost its replacement wings and suffered damage to its replacement feet. The curve of the underside of the feet suggests that the eagle's claws once grasped the surface of a globe, also now missing, probably held in the hand of a statue of an emperor or a god.

The eagle is not a legionary eagle, but was immortalized as such by Rosemary Sutcliff in her children's books *The Eagle of the Ninth* and *The Silver Branch*.

## Reference:

Toynbee, J.M.C., *Art in Roman Britain*, (1962)

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