

? What was life like in Roman Britain ?

Key Figures

Julius Caesar
Aulus Plautius
Emperor Claudius
Hadrian
Boudicca

-  People– Who were the key figures in Britain during this period?
-  Power– Why was Roman occupancy so significant in British History?
-  Place in History- What Roman developments created a lasting legacy in Britain?
-  Purpose– How did Roman changes most impact daily life in Britain?



Links

Empire– Victorians (Year 5)
Industrial Revolution (Year 5)

Key Knowledge Focus

- ⇒ Aulus Plautius was a Roman politician and general of the mid-1st century. He began the Roman conquest of Britain in 43, and became the first governor of the new province, serving from 43 to 46 CE. Emperor Claudius dispatched 40,000 troops.
- ⇒ Over 5 years the Romans had established themselves in southern and central England.
- ⇒ The most famous resistance came from Boudicca in 60-61AD. Colchester was burnt to the ground then London and St Albans. Roman Governor Suetonius Paulinus finally defeated Boudicca.
- ⇒ Hadrian's wall was built in 120AD-128AD to separate the border between Roman Britain and the Northern Tribes.
- ⇒ Many Britons became Romanised and urbanised: they wore togas, learnt Latin, built town houses and villas. For others, particularly small rural farmers, the pattern of life probably did not change much, apart from the obligation to pay taxes to their Roman rulers.
- ⇒ The Romans built 10,000 miles of road across Britain. These were built to support the strategy of conquest linking forts.
- ⇒ Many of these are used today as modern roads, such as the Fosse Way which went from the Roman towns of Lincoln to Exeter.
- ⇒ Before the Romans came, very few Britons could read or write. Instead, information was usually passed by word of mouth.
- ⇒ The Romans wrote down their history, their literature and their laws.
- ⇒ They spoke Latin, and it wasn't long before some Britons started to use it too.
- ⇒ The area south of the Fosse Way (Lincoln to Exeter) was the wealthiest and most Romanised part of Britain where Latin was spoken.
- ⇒ Latin was also the language of Christianity and remained the universal language of learning, law and literature for 1000 years after the end of the Roman Empire.
- ⇒ New Roman towns were settled with Roman citizens and ruled like Italian towns with governors each municipality ruled itself.
- ⇒ Local authorities, justice and trade centred around the Forum and Basilica, Public baths and amphitheatres centred around administrative buildings.
- ⇒ The growth of towns opened up new markets for goods and produce from the country, which could be sold in the forum and basilica complex that lay at the centre of every town. Here people could watch the progress of court cases conducted on behalf of leading citizens

Roman Britain

- ⇒ The Romans' great strengths were organisational and military. They brought urban life, roads, permanent military garrisons, centralised government, taxation, their language – Latin – and later Christianity to all the lands they conquered.
- ⇒ The new rulers brought central government, coinage, towns, baths, circuses, gladiators, taxes, roads and country villas.
- ⇒ One of the most significant changes to everyday life in Britain was the introduction of Roman coinage. Lots and lots of Roman coins in small denominations were found across Britain, even on quiet rural sites. The economy was becoming more monetized, so even very low-level exchanges were now taking place by means of money rather than barter.

Key Vocabulary

Topic
Legions
Invasion
Empire
Emperor
Celt

Skill
Compared
Evidence
Source
Reconstruct
explanation

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Key Knowledge Focus

according to an entirely new legal system. They could also hear proclamations read, and follow the discussions of the town council.

- ⇒ Building designs– Villas with hypocaust systems, frescos and mosaics contrasted with traditional Celtic round houses.
- ⇒ Before the Romans arrived the Britons cultivated cereals (mostly wheat and barley), and peas and beans, generally on a subsistence basis. The Romans introduced over 50 new kinds of food plants: fruits such as fig, grape, apple, pear, cherry, plum, damson, mulberry, date and olive; vegetables such as cucumber and celery; nuts, seeds and pulses such as lentil, pine nut, almond, walnut and sesame; and herbs and spices including coriander, dill and fennel. Many of these were then successfully grown in Britain.
- ⇒ From about the 3rd century, Christianity appeared in Britain and got a secure foothold in the towns. Of course, it had plenty of competition. There were dozens of other cults being practiced in the British towns, just like in all the other Roman cities.