

ROMANS FASCINATING FACTS

How to say 'cheers' to a Roman: *Bibe vivas multis annis* (Drink! May you live for many years).

The throwing spear (pilum) was designed with a long thin point to bend on impact, so it could not be picked up and thrown back.

What did the Romans use for toilet paper? Pieces of sponge found in sewers in York suggest natural sponges on sticks were the answer. One each or communal?

Roman women were expected to have hairless legs (but did the Romano-British?) and used some vile creams or rubbed the hair with stones.

ILLUSTRATIONS

- 1 - Glass from Lockham walled cemetery
- 2 - Statue of Minerva, from Plaxtol
- 3 - Replica of iron imperial-Gallic helmet
- 4 - Detail of Samian jug from Hartlip
- 5 - Dragonsque brooch

Everyday Life in Roman Kent

With Roman rule came Roman ideas which combined with those of the locals to create a peculiarly British way of life. The first century AD saw a huge change in household goods; many were imported from the Continent; others were copied by the British, but many local styles continued.

Some imported goods

- Fish sauce (liquamen)
- Pottery
- Wine
- Olive oil
- Glass
- Silk
- Silver



Exports from Britain

- Fish for sauce
- Ragstone
- Corn
- Slaves
- Iron
- Wool
- Tin

What was Maidstone like?

The Maidstone area was spread with villas and farmsteads. The good river and road access to London, Rochester and Canterbury may have made it a small centre for trade and local events. Several villas, cemeteries, road-side burials, coin hoards and many individual artefacts have been found and maybe more is beneath today's buildings.



A Maidstone Villa

Mount Villa, overlooking the river near today's Maidstone East Station was discovered in 1843. It had at least seventeen rooms, with walls of local ragstone, some plastered and painted in red, black, yellow and white. Two rooms had underfloor heating. A yard and sheds would be used for farming. In front was a small fountain.



According to legend Rome was founded in the Italy of today by Romulus in 753 BC (In reality: Romans were farmers living in a region called Latium). They built a huge Empire, mainly due to a highly organised army.

ROMAN BRITAIN

The Roman period in Britain began nearly 2,000 years ago and lasted over 400 years:

The Roman Invasion

Julius Caesar led expeditions to Britain in 55 and 54 BC. He wrote of fighting the armies of four kings in Kent and storming a hillfort near Canterbury (probably Bigbury).



The Roman Conquest

In AD 43, four legions led by Aulus Plautius landed in Britain, the majority at Richborough in Kent. The Battle on the River Medway, Kent, was a decisive Roman victory. Emperor Claudius then came over to lead the conquest of the capital, Colchester, and England (and soon after Wales)

became part of the Roman Empire.



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About 1,600 years ago Britain was over-run by three Germanic groups - the Saxons, Angles and Jutes. They came from the Continent as

Rome's mercenary soldiers, or as refugee farmers and families.

The Jutes settled in Kent and seem to have brought the locals into their settlements, many as slaves. Kent became a stable and prosperous kingdom with flourishing trade with Europe.

The Evidence

The majority of our evidence is from burials; this must give a bias to our knowledge and understanding as only certain objects would be selected as grave goods. Settlements are probably under today's towns and villages. Archaeological work elsewhere has shown houses were usually of wood with thatched roofs; often grouped around a communal hall. They were basically farming communities.

Fashion

The Anglo-Saxons kept contact with their homelands and fashion followed German styles. Wool, flax, and extravagant imported silk were used, often in rich colours - red, purple, blue and green.

Some Roman ideas on cleanliness may have been adopted - toilet sets containing tweezers, picks for teeth or nails, ear-scoops and cosmetic



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brushes have been found in female graves.

Eating and Drinking

The local chief would repay his retainers, and demonstrate his social status with feasts. Ale, mead made from fermented honey, cider, fruit wines, milk or water were drunk and wine in wealthy houses (quantities of pottery wine bottles from France were found at Sarre cemetery, Kent).

Bread was the staple food, and accompanied all meals. Spices, herbs, fruits, and even flowers, were used.

Warfare

Fighting was a male thing. There seem to have been three levels of male society: unarmed serfs, freemen with spears and the nobility who had swords and, very occasionally, armour.

Shield, seax, axe, and sometimes bow and arrows were used as weapons (knives were for eating with).

Incoming Christianity put an end to burial with grave goods by the 8th century AD, and so to much of our evidence.



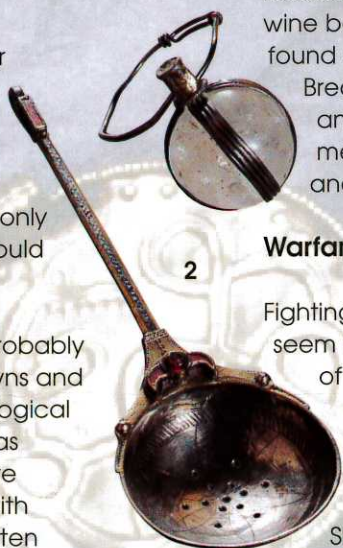
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ANGLO SAXON FASCINATING FACTS

The Anglo-Saxon language developed into modern English, and is still seen in many place names: 'Ham' and 'ton' mean 'homestead', as in nearby Linton; Lin means 'flax'.

Few could read or write. Runes were used for spells. Often a vertical arrow, the rune for the god of death, was put on weapons.

Crystal balls and perforated silver spoons seem confined to Kent, and to women. There is still no agreement on the use or meaning of these pieces - what do you think they were for?



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ILLUSTRATIONS

- 1 - Pendants from Milton Regis
- 2 - Crystal ball and silver spoon from Bifrons cemetery
- 3 - Gold plated buckle from Sarre cemetery
- 4 - Glass claw beaker from Faversham
- 5 - Glass vessels from Aylesford
- 6 - Jewellery from Bifrons cemetery



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