



ROMAN LANCASTER

Case File No: 13





Roman Invasion and Taking the North

The Roman armies of Claudius Caesar invaded Britain in 43CE, but the Roman Empire had been around for ages before that. At the time the Romans invaded, the **Empire** stretched from North Africa in the south, the Caspian Sea in the east, the Atlantic to the west and north into France and Belgium.

Gradually, the legions sent by Claudius Caesar pushed up the country, fighting tribes of Celts along the way. The Chiefs of the Celtic tribes gave in, and their people were taken as slaves or otherwise agreed to help the Romans get what they wanted. What did they want? Well, there were lots of things that the Romans could get in Britain: corn, leather, wool, metals (copper, tin, lead, gold and silver) and, of course, slaves. Some Britons were richly rewarded for helping the Romans with fine houses and material goods.

I am not your every day goose! I live up on the Capitoline Hill and am one of the Sacred Geese of Apollo. During the fearful sack of our fine city, our brave soldiers defended against several Gallic attacks, but it was up to us to save the day! Back in 387CE, the Gaul's decided to change tactics and make a sneak attack. If it wasn't for me and my friends they would have succeeded! But, we honked and squawked and make such a racket it woke up all the sleeping soldiers who were then able to fight off those sneaky barbarians!

A BIT OF BACKGROUND

Just in case you haven't heard of the Roman Empire, let's start from the beginning... About 3000 years ago the residents in a village in Italy, called Rome, were fed up of being raided so they built a wall to protect themselves from being attacked. They realised that the best way to stop your enemies is to attack them before they attack you! So, they started attacking nearby villages and towns and capturing them. They were becoming more powerful and there were more men that could be trained as full-time soldiers. Before long, Rome had taken all of Italy! The Romans fought and fought until they owned all the land around the Mediterranean. The thing about being great conquerors is that it's really hard to stop conquering! In 43 AD the Roman Empire invaded Britain. The empire already stretched around the Mediterranean, including much of Europe and the northern shores of Africa. The Roman army stayed in Britain for over 400 years, finally withdrawing to defend Rome in 410AD. During this time they shaped life in Britain in many ways, building roads and forts, and bringing trade goods, foods, and cultural practices from around the empire.

The Romans built forts and roads as they expanded their control over Britain. Towns were built with temples, baths, and even amphitheatres, where people could go to watch spectacles such as gladiator fighting. Famously, the Romans built a wall across the country to mark and defend the edge of their Empire, called Hadrian's Wall. All the building that the Romans did was very expensive, and the Britons were taxed heavily to fund it. In Lancaster, the Roman army built several different forts. The remains of the last one, built sometime in the 4th Century AD, can still be seen on the slopes below Lancaster Castle. Next to this can also be found the remains of a bath house, possibly part of the Praetorium, or official house of the commanding officer at the fort.

As the invading Romans settled in the area they began to integrate into the local culture, at the same time, the presence of the forts lead to industries and towns springing up around them. Evidence of military, domestic, and industrial life have been found across Lancaster and the surrounding areas. The objects in our collections give us a fascinating glimpse into what it would have been like to live and work in Roman Lancaster.



BARBARIANS?!

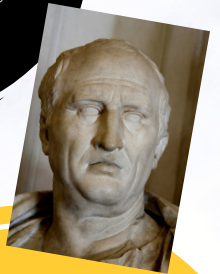
A lot of what we know about the people that lived in Britain before the Romans comes from archaeological finds. This is because the only writing we have from Iron Age Britain is on Iron Age coins. However, the Romans did read and write, and they left written records about the Celtic tribes that they attacked and conquered. They were depicted as warlike, savage and dangerous.

"they are the most ignorant people I have ever conquered."



They are "fearless warriors."

"they cannot be taught to read and are the ugliest and most stupid race I ever saw."



"men who are complete savages and lead a miserable existence because of the cold; and therefore, in my opinion, the northern limit of our inhabited world is to be placed there"



"Of course, they are practically naked and do not mind the mud because they are unfamiliar with the use of clothing, and they adorn their waists and necks with iron...They also tattoo their bodies with various patterns and pictures of all sorts of animals...They are very fierce and dangerous fighters, protected only by a narrow shield and a spear, with a sword slung from their naked bodies."



Most people in the Iron Age lived in family farms or on hill forts in **round houses**. Evidence for Iron Age round houses have been found at Portfield hill fort near Whalley. These were one-roomed homes made of **wattle and daub** with a pointed thatched roof.

In the centre of the round house was a fire where meals were cooked. Farmers grew oats and barley and wheat. Cattle were used for ploughing as well as for meat and milk. Sheep were kept for wool and meat. Others worked as potters, carpenters, and metal workers.

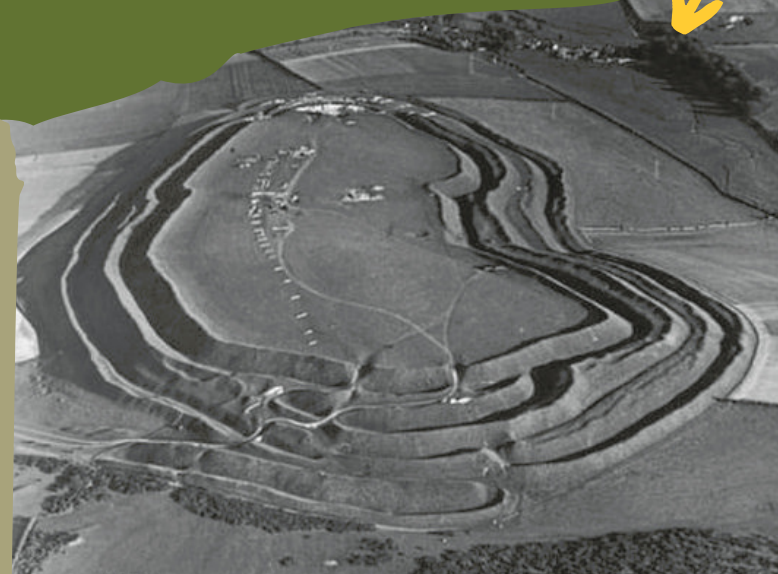


Brigantes - Enemies of Rome



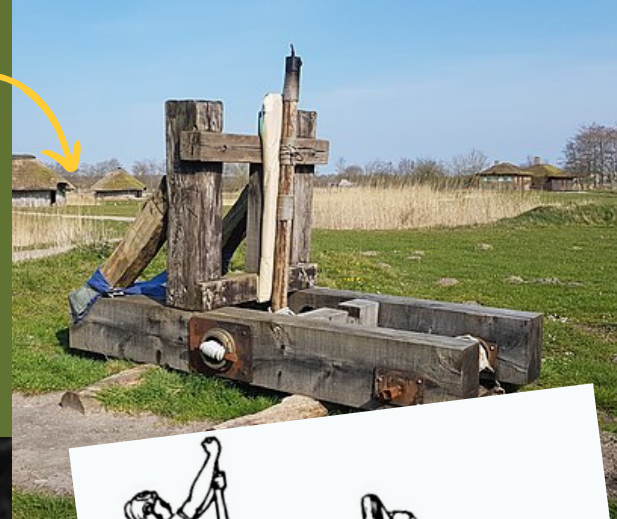
Some large tribes put up a good fight against the Romans. They had built fortified towns to live in, like **Maiden Castle**, for instance. These forts had concentric rings of ditches and fences around them that meant the people inside could defend themselves from above using stones and slings. These tactics had been super successful until the Romans attacked. What the Britons didn't expect were the highly efficient Roman army or the huge siege weapons that the Roman soldiers brought with them!

The people who lived here were known to the Romans as the **Brigantes**. The tribal territory of the Brigantes included most of northern England and parts of southwest Scotland. The Brigantes proved to be more difficult for the Romans to conquer than many of the southern tribes. It seemed to take the Romans decades to complete the conquest of Brigantia.





Roman soldiers were able to use siege engines that the Celts didn't expect, such as ballistae and **onagers**. The ballistae were like giant crossbows and would fire stones or giant crossbow bolts at the defenders. Meanwhile onagers would hurl great boulders over the Celtic ramparts using the tension of twisted ropes or springs to build up tremendous force. This would cover the infantry advance and limit the number of missiles the Celts would have been able to throw at the Romans.



Battering rams were protected by a wooden shed and could be wheeled up to fortification to batter them down.



Once the defenders had been picked off, the Romans would be able to advance using their shields and armour for protection against missiles, mostly forming the **Testudo formation**. Testudo is Latin for Turtle! The Roman Legionaries would have formed a well ordered line and assaulted the ramparts with scaling ladders. They may have also used basic tools to pick away at palisades or level any turf ramparts. Battering rams may have been used to easily break down the wooden gates or even wooden walls surrounding the interior of the hillfort.

EVIDENCE FROM HISTORY



The Celtic Britains were described as "simple savages". But the Romans just didn't understand them.

They couldn't understand why the Celts were reluctant to accept the Roman way of life. The Celtic Britains were not just warriors, they were skilled craftsmen and could make beautiful and complex objects like these-

1. Celtic sword and scabbard dated to 60 BC, the pommel is finely decorated with a Celtic deity
2. Gold torc dated to 75BC found in Needland Forest in Staffordshire. This was a neck ring that would have identified the wearer as a person of high rank.
3. Trumpet brooch, British 1st or 2nd century – this Iron Age trumpet brooch was used to hold clothes together before we had zips and buttons!



1



2



3

ROMAN LANCASTER



After the Brigantian tribes had finally been conquered by Quintus Petillius Cerialis he founded the fort at Lancaster which is where the castle is now. In the first century, this would have been a very military area and just auxiliary soldiers and their families would have lived here. There would have been barracks and granaries as well as the defences. There was also a villa for the commander. The size of the fort was large by any standards which suggests it was an important frontier base used for pushing up into the Lake District and later into Scotland.

EVIDENCE FROM HISTORY

This terracotta tile is from our collection and was made at the Quernmore kilns. Quernmore was an important pottery in Roman times and provided a range of goods. If you look closely at this tile you can see stripes and thumbmarks pushed into the terracotta, this gave a rougher surface for mortar to grip onto. In the lower left corner you can also see a print left by a dog who must have run over the tile while it was still wet.



The special forces of the Roman army were here – we know about three different divisions that were based here. Two were Roman cavalry auxiliary units whilst another was called Numerus Barcariorum, meaning Unit of Boatman, they were a special unit that would have to complete mundane tasks such as ferrying and transportation but would also have been responsible for special defence and intelligence gathering in Morecambe Bay just like the SBS today.

This carved figure was one of a group found in 1794 by workmen digging the Lancaster to Preston Canal. The group contained four heads, two lions, and one headless figure.

They appeared to have been deliberately buried in a hole about 3 feet deep, although no remains of buildings were found nearby. They are thought to be from the 2nd Century AD and may have come from a shrine or temple.



EVIDENCE FROM OUR COLLECTION



This is the sole of a boot from our collection. It is made of leather and was excavated in 1973 at Mitre Yard. It is believed to be the sole of a standard soldier's boot, so it may have come from one of the soldiers stationed at the fort in Lancaster. Similar boot soles can be seen in many collections around the UK, showing that similar or identical boots were manufactured and sent around the country to be part of a Roman soldier's uniform.



LIFE IN THE VICUS

First of all, what on earth is a vicus? A vicus is the Roman name for any small settlement. Vicus sprang up around forts like the one at Lancaster to serve the needs of the soldiers posted there. There would have been shops and services for the soldiers and their families to use, as well as places to eat and drink and gamble. Soldiers may have started relationships with local people, even got married or had children. When they retired, they might have stayed in the area, making a life for themselves in the vicus.

Anyone for peacock tongues?



The Romans are well known for their flamboyant foods. They enjoyed eating dormice dipped in honey and poppy seeds, foul-smelling fish sauce, boiled pigs udders, snails fattened on milk, and even peacocks tongues!



This little cockerel **oil lamp** is made from enamelled copper alloy dated to 200-410 AD. It was found at Slyne-with-Hest. It's elaborately decorated and would have been the main light source for a Roman household. It's unusual in that it is made of copper, unlike the usual stone or ceramic. It would have been owned by a well-to-do Roman family, perhaps a Roman cavalry officer who lived in the fort. How it works - a textile wick drops down into the oil and is lit at the end, burning the oil as it is drawn up the wick.



By the 2nd century, the vicus settlement developed outside the fort. Locals would have built **strip house buildings** along the roadside so that they could set up shops to sell useful items to the Romans. These were long houses with the front showing off what they were selling and living quarters in the back. The roads would have been flanked by locals selling food, wine, pottery, tools, clothes, weapons and many other things imported from all over the empire. The soldiers and their families would have bought these things to make living in Lancaster more homely. Many local merchants or craftsmen would have been happy that the Romans were here!

EVIDENCE FROM OUR COLLECTION



This small metal object is a **strap end**. These are quite common finds and were used to finish leather straps and belts which were used in both military and domestic clothing in Roman Lancaster. This one was found in the 1920s in Vicarage Field near Lancaster Castle where you can still see the remains of the last Roman fort and a bath house.





ROMAN EMPERORS



THE GOOD, THE BAD (and the ugly!)

Here at Lancaster Museums, we are lucky enough to have our very own in-house Roman expert!

Here are his top 5 picks for the best and worst Roman Emperors.



THE GOOD

Augustus was the first Roman Emperor and founded the Roman Empire (in power from 27BCE-14CE). He gained vast quantities of lands across Europe and North Africa and made peace with the rival superpower, the Parthian Empire. Thanks to Augustus' hard work, there was a period of peace in the Roman world for over 200 years! As well as bringing relative tranquillity to the Empire, Augustus spent quite a bit of time rebuilding Rome, including buildings such as the Pantheon.

Trajan was born in Spain and reigned from 98-117CE. He was officially declared *optimus princeps* ("best ruler") by the senate. Like Augustus he took loads of land and by the time he died the Empire was at its largest! He improved the lives of ordinary people by building public facilities, including baths, and by giving out free grain and bread to the 200,000 poorest citizens of Rome.

Marcus Aurelius came to power during a period of constant war. He was a great military leader who successfully waged war against the Parthian Empire (161-66CE) and the rebel kingdom of Armenia, as well as defeating three Germanic tribes in the Marcomannic Wars (166-80CE). He governed well despite between 5 and 10 million people dying of plague in 165 or 166. To top it all, he was also a great stoic philosopher, and was known as the Philosopher King. He showed a lot of interest in ensuring slaves were granted freedom when deserved, the protection of orphans and minors as well as fair choice in choosing city councillors.

Hadrian is perhaps best known for building his wall which marked the northern limit of Britannia. But, there's more to Hadrian than that! He invested money in building strong defenses at the borders and unified people of the Empire. He visited nearly every province in the Empire. He had a fairly peaceful reign and paid for many building and improvement projects, including the huge Temple of Venus in Rome.

Vespasian was born near Rome into the equestrian class, one of the lower classes of the aristocratic Romans. His renown came from his military success as he was legate of the famed II Augusta during the Roman Invasion of Britain in 43CE and crushed a Jewish revolt in 66CE. During the year of the Four Emperors following on from Nero's suicide that resulted in civil war, the legions of Egypt declared him an emperor. He was well known for his reforms and big building programmes. He even had time to get cracking on the mighty Coliseum!



THE BAD

Caligula started off OK, and was known as noble and moderate. But pretty soon became known for his cruelty, selfishness and greed. He demanded to be treated like a god and spent most of his time building extravagant houses for himself! He was the first Roman Emperor to be assassinated when he was only 28. He was stabbed 30 times and his wife and daughter were also killed.

Elagabalus was born in Syria and came from a prominent Arab family. He served as the head priest of the sun god Elagabal and was raised to Emperor at the age of 14 in an army revolt started by his mum! He replaced the traditional head of the Roman gods, Jupiter, with Elagabal and forced Roman citizens to celebrate him. Elagabalus had 4 wives, including a Vestal Virgin, all before his 18th birthday! When he was only 18 his own granny plotted to have him and his mum killed. Their bodies were beheaded and dragged through Rome and Elagabalus' body was chucked into the River Tiber – what a gory end!

Nero was well-liked by the praetorian guard and the plebs, but hated by the aristocracy. To the horror of the senate and nobility he made public appearances as a poet, musician and charioteer which was scandalous to many, but made him popular to the poor. He confiscated the property of senators and heavily taxed the people. He did a bit of murdering into the bargain, doing away with his mother, his wife, and his foster brother. His ruthlessness didn't stop there; many believe the Great Fire of Rome which burned for nine days was organised by Nero to clear space for a palace expansion! Eventually he was declared a public enemy and condemned to death. But he killed himself, aged 30.

Commodus thought he was the reincarnation of the great Greek hero Hercules, and declared himself a god! He was the son of Marcus Aurelius and for a time ruled alongside him. He made a disgrace of himself by performing as a gladiator in the Coliseum alongside slaves. He had no interest in ruling, preferring a leisurely life of hunting and lazing around. At the age of 31, he was assassinated by a wrestler called Narcissus while he was in the baths!

Domitian came to power when his brother suffered a fatal illness, which some people think may well have had something to do with Domitian! He was a pretty paranoid guy and executed anyone who didn't agree with him! On top of that, he developed new ways to torture people (everyone needs a hobby!) and persecuted philosophers and the Jews. No-one felt safe, even his own family! They plotted to have Domitian assassinated, and he was stabbed to death in 96CE.

What do you use to cut a Roman Emperor's hair?
...Caesars!



ROMAN SOCIETY

Roman society was hierarchical. This means that there were different social classes that people belonged to.

The descendants of the most ancient and powerful noble families. They owned a lot of land, lived in large houses and always had political power in the senate.

EMPEROR

Patrician Families

Senators

Equestrians

Plebians

Freed slaves

Slaves

Ordinary workers and peasants who worked the patrician's land. They just lived in apartments and had no political rights.



My name is Gegania and I'm one of the Vestal Virgins. I was only 6 when I was chosen to do this job. It's a real honour to be one of the Vestal Virgins and there's no way I would have been selected if it hadn't been for my dad being so important.

But to be honest, it can be a bit of a drag – there's so much to learn and so much responsibility. Where I work is called the Temple of Vesta. Inside there is a sacred flame that has to be kept alight all the time. If we let it go out, we will be harshly punished. We aren't allowed to have boyfriends and can't marry or have children for 30 years! If we broke this rule we would be buried alive – can you believe that! We study rituals and sacrifices, and have to look after seriously important things, like the wills of powerful men and sacred objects. We also have to make mola salsa, this salty dough that is used in ceremonies and sacrifices. Of course, there are some perks; we get to sit in special reserved seats at the public games, which is cool. And we are really popular and powerful. Me and the other Vestal Virgins are so trusted that we can give evidence without taking an oath, and we can free criminals and slaves just by touching them.



My name is Macro and I have always wanted to be a Roman legionary! At the moment, since my mum ran away, I just live with my dad in the suburra which is the poorest part of Rome. Everywhere is so closely packed together, it stinks all the time and it is really dangerous as there are thieves, murderers and gangs around every corner, not to mention the regular fires! But you soon learn to toughen up around the suburra, got to have your wits about you too. That's why I think I would be perfect for the Roman army; I mean what else is there to do! I certainly don't want to become a labourer like my dad, just working away in warehouses in Ostia. He sometimes can't even put food on our table. But that's mostly because he spends too much time down at the tavern drinking and gambling. Although it's not so bad, sometimes, if I help Falco the baker, he lets me have a loaf of bread! Either way, life in the army has to be better, or so I have heard! You get regular pay and rations, plus get to see the world and always have a roof or tent over your head even when on the march. I have also been lucky enough to catch glimpses of a triumph. It was Germanicus, son of the Emperor Tiberius himself after he came back from beating the Germanic tribes to avenge the disaster at the Teutoburg forest! I remember seeing the fierce Barbarians being paraded in chains and a German princess, there were also replicas of rivers and mountains to show us what mysterious lands he had conquered and brought into the Roman Empire. I would have been so proud to have been one of the Roman legionaries marching in that triumph. Hopefully one day I will make it into the legion and be able to fight for someone like Germanicus and even march in one of those Triumphs!



Hi, my name is Leucus, and I have grown up as a slave in a rich Roman household on the Quirinal Hill. My parents were from Gaul, from the Avernus tribe! Apparently my dad was a fierce Gaulish warrior who was killed by the Roman legionaries when fighting for our freedom, then myself and my mother were captured as slaves.

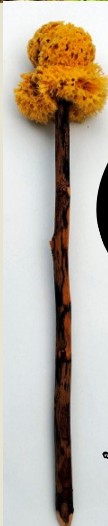
I have never seen my mother since we were separated, but it all happened so fast I just get on with my jobs. It's hard work as I must work all day helping in the kitchens, getting firewood for the hypocaust system, and constantly attending to my master and mistresses' needs who can be quite bossy. This includes helping them bathe, serving them food and so on, but the more fun jobs include taking messages and purchasing simple goods for the kitchens. At least I can get out and see the sites of Rome. I love the forum with all the great temples. In Gaul I was impressed by wooden walls and the longhouse at my village in my homeland, now they seem like nothing compared to the great walls of this city, the temples, and the roads! And no one would dare harm me as they know I am the property of such an important family. I am going to continue to work hard for my masters as one day they may grant me my freedom if I serve them well. Who knows, I could return home or make something of myself in Rome itself.

You can visit the remains of the bathhouse behind the Maritime Museum on St George's Quay – just head up the path to the Priory Church and turn off left where it is signposted.



BATH TIME!

The Romans are pretty famous for their hygiene. They even had a goddess Hygieia, who was the personification of cleanliness, sanitation, and health. As well as bringing fresh water to cities via aqueducts and taking away the gross stuff through advanced underground sewerage systems, the Romans also brought bath time to Britain in a really big way! They loved the rituals of bathing; a visit to the local baths was both healthy and social. They didn't have bubble bath and rubber ducks. So, what were Roman baths like? Well, there were hot baths, cold plunge pools and visitors could be massaged with hot oil which was scraped off to reveal healthy skin. There were also gymnasiums to exercise, lift weights and wrestle!



Poo stick

If you were a Roman, you didn't use toilet paper but a sponge on a stick that you shared with other people...



BE A HISTORY DETECTIVE

In and around Lancaster

Roman roads have their origins in military necessity. Milestones stood along the main routes. Three, like the one below, have been found locally. Lancaster was approached by two roads from the south – from Walton-le-Dale and from Ribchester which converged at Galgate. The road that leads out of the fort's east gate was the most important. It followed along church street and divided into two at Stonewall, one leading to Caton and the other to Quernmore. On the northern bank of the Lune this led through Halton and Arkholme towards a fording place just south of Whittington to gain access to Burrow-in-Lonsdale. Roads were important for enabling fast military responses to raids or rebellions, as well as for easy trade links for supply. The roman army would have constantly needed supplies to be delivered promptly.

Part of the north facing 4th century Lancaster fort walls can still be seen today with the Wery Wall that was built in 330 AD. It is thought that the Wery Wall fort was built to be more powerful than earlier forts to defend against seaborne raids. Coin and pottery evidence suggests that the Wery Wall was used well into the 5th century as well.

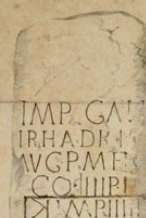
FURTHER AFIELD

You could definitely visit Hadrian's Wall, but you don't have to go that far to find excellent examples of the Roman occupation of northern England. Why not visit the remains of the **Roman Forts** at **Ambleside** or **Hardnott**? They were both built by Hadrian. You could even go to **Ravenglass** to see the bathhouse there. This is the site of the tallest Roman structure in northern England, standing at 4m high. If you want to find out more about the Romans in Lancashire, why not visit **Ribchester Roman Museum and bath house**, Lancashire's only dedicated Roman antiquities museum.

THIS MONTH...

Visit the City Museum and look for the Insus tombstone. When you find it, have your History Detective Passport stamped!

The Insus Tombstone is a memorial that depicts a mounted cavalryman brandishing the decapitated head of a defeated barbarian. The body is at his horse's feet. Insus was from the Treveri tribe, western Germany. He was a junior officer of the Roman army. Because he was only referred to by a single name, this shows that he was not a citizen of Rome, but an auxiliary cavalryman. Decorations include the mythical creature Medusa, who turned people to stone and had a head of snakes in place of hair, as well as oak leaves. In the Roman world oak leaves were a symbol of bravery, suggesting Insus was a particularly brave and daring cavalryman.





LINGUISTIC LEGACY



(Linguistic means language)

Did you know that there are words from Ancient Rome that we still use today?
Here are just a few!



Did you catch the match?

What a circus! Honestly, their manager is such a dictator.

Yeah, they were decimated! What a triumph! What an ovation!

Their team are so old they need a curator!



Triumph

We think of a **triumph** as a success. The Romans had words for the different celebrations that were held in honour of military victory. A triumph was a particular kind of ceremony held in honour of a general after a decisive victory. He would be part of a procession into the city led by the senate and all the important people in the city, the spoils of battle, the captives in chains, and after the general would follow his entire army in marching order. There would be sacrifices and huge feasts to celebrate.



Ovation

If you weren't quite successful enough to deserve a triumph, you might get an **ovation**. When you hear this word, you will likely think of a standing ovation, the sort of thing that happens at the theatre after a really good show. At some point, the English meaning switched from being the Roman military sense to meaning a really big round of applause!



Dictator

Have you heard people talk about some leaders being **dictators**? In ancient Rome, a dictator was the chief magistrate appointed in emergencies. He had absolute power to do whatever he needed to. Nowadays when we talk about a dictator, we are talking about a leader who controls everything.



Circus

Next time you get the chance to go to the **circus** be sure to amaze your friends and family with this fact: In Ancient Rome, a circus was something like an amphitheatre, somewhere where you would go to watch amazing athletic feats, chariot racing and even gladiators.



Curator

Of course, we love that the word **curator** comes from Ancient Rome, even though the Roman meaning is a little different to the way we use it here at Lancaster Museums. In Ancient Rome, a curator was a person specially appointed to look after someone who wasn't able to look after themselves. Our curator looks after paintings and objects so that they can be enjoyed by everyone who visits us!



Decimate

Finally, you might have heard people who enjoy sport talking about their team **decimating** the opposition. When they say this, they mean that their team has beaten the opposition hands down. The Romans used this to mean something slightly more gruesome. In fact, when a group of men was decimated it meant that one in every ten men in the group was chosen by lottery and killed. We are glad that this isn't happening on football pitches up and down the country each weekend!

This alter stone is from the 3rd Century AD. It was found in 1802 at Folly Farm in Skerton when farmhands were building limekilns on the land. The stone was found near to a spring and features the word IALONO, which is derived from IAL, meaning water.



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