



# How the Romans lived in Britain

By Michael Coleman

**NARRATOR:** In the early years of Roman Britain there were some big differences between the people...

**RICH ROMAN:** I am a rich Roman. I'm powerful and I'm wealthy.

**POOR BRITON:** I am a poor Briton. Er...that's it, really.

**NARRATOR:** But over the next 300 years life changed for the Britons...

**POOR BRITON:** I don't feel like a poor Briton any more! I eat like a Roman, I dress like a Roman, I speak like a Roman. Now I feel like a poor Roman!

**RICH ROMAN:** I still feel like a rich Roman, though. Meet my family. I am the paterfamilias – which means 'head of a family'. Then there is my wife – whose money became mine when we were married. My children live with us. My daughters will move out when I find husbands for them, but when my sons marry they will probably stay here with their wives and their children... Quiet! I own a villa, many sheep and pigs – and a lot of slaves.

**NARRATOR:** The Romans forced people to work for them as slaves. Slaves would be bought and sold in markets. Male slaves would be used for such things as working in the field, female slaves for duties in the house. A slave with a talent would cost more – like this slave, who is able to cook...

**COOK:**



A valuable slave's still a slave, though – and I've been slaving away in the kitchen since dawn. Do you eat three meals a day? Then you're eating like a Roman. First I have to deal with ientaculum: that's breakfast...

## History Clips: The Romans

RICH ROMAN: My usual, cook. Wheat pancakes with dates and honey.

COOK: Then there's prandium: the mid-day meal.

RICH ROMAN: Fish, bread, cold meat and vegetables for me. I'm saving myself for later!

COOK: Later. He means cena, the main meal, evening dinner. If I was slaving for a poor Roman it would be easy: just vegetables and porridge. But for a rich Roman, food is a way of showing off.

RICH ROMAN: Oh, cook! We have a dinner party tonight, cook. Be adventurous! Your snails fattened in milk are good, but what I'd really like are partridge brains or flamingo tongues!

COOK: Partridges? Flamingoes? Hah! He's getting the snails. They're easier to catch!

NARRATOR: Romans liked crazy dishes, too – such as a roast hare with bird's wings stuck on to make it look like a flying horse! Yuk! Dinner parties also gave Romans a chance to dress up. Everyday wear for a man would be a knee-length tunic and a cloak and for a woman a tunic that stretched down to her ankles, with a loose garment called a stolla on top. Dressing-up clothes were different...

ANNOUNCER: On to the catwalk first: Roman citizen in his best toga. See how all that fine Egyptian cotton is carefully folded round his body to hide the tunic beneath? And notice the coloured trim, showing how important he is. Delightful! Next, the citizen's wife: a tunic of silk, perfectly matched by her jewellery and make-up. And to top it off – beautiful, curly hair! Yes, you can't beat a wig made from the lovely hair of your British slave girl!

NARRATOR: Beautiful things were important to the Romans. Their buildings and villas were elaborately decorated. A special type of picture they brought to Britain was a mosaic...

INTERVIEWER: Hello, listeners! Today I'm talking to Pickaxo, the world-famous mosaic-maker.

PICKAXO: Hello every bodies.

INTERVIEWER: Mr Pickaxo, what exactly is a mosaic?

PICKAXO: A mosaic is picture made of itsy-bitsy stones or teeny-weeny pebbles or titchy-witchy bits of glass or pottery.

INTERVIEWER: Well, the stones and pebbles I can work out. But what is your favourite way of collecting...er...titchy-witchy bits of glass or pottery?

PICKAXO: Simple. First, find vase or glass or something you not like much. Then take big hammer and whack hard! Now have lots of titchy-witchy bits!

