

The Past in the Present

Here are the news headlines

1 The West has sent more soldiers to Iraq.

Enemy fighters there have captured and executed the leader of the Western army.

2 More refugees have tried to enter the country, after the government announced that no more will be allowed in.

One leader has already built a wall to try and keep foreigners out.

3 There have been more protests against high government taxes.

Protestors say that ordinary people are paying too much tax because the rich have found ways to avoid paying theirs.

Same old problems

Surprisingly, these are not recent news stories – they're ancient history! This was all happening 2,000 years ago!

- The 'West' was the Roman Empire and 'Iraq' was Mesopotamia.
- The refugees were the Goths, escaping the Huns who were invading their land. The wall was Hadrian's Wall, in the North of England, built to stop the early Scots coming into Roman Britain.
- Taxes were high to pay for Roman wars and unemployment, but rich people knew how to move their money to places where the government couldn't tax it.

So, perhaps it's true that history repeats itself!



The Romans in Britain

However, many of the **good** things in our lives are also reminders of our ancient past. People often don't realize this, because they've forgotten how much of their culture has come from foreign peoples. This is certainly true in Britain, where the Romans ruled for nearly 400 years.

So what good have the Romans done for us?

Roads

Romans built the first super highways for their armies to move along quickly. It's easy to see which modern British roads have followed the 9,600 km of old Roman roads. They are long, wide, and incredibly straight!



Central heating

The Romans didn't enjoy British winters – a soldier's letter sent home from Hadrian's Wall asked for more socks and underpants to keep the cold out! However, life inside their villas was lovely and warm, and we've taken the idea of underfloor central heating from them!



Global currency

The British said no to the Euro in 1992, but they have had a global currency before. People could spend Roman coins all over Europe, and in Turkey and North Africa, too!



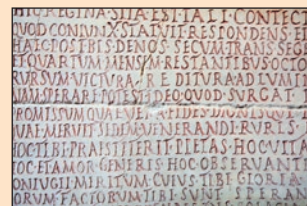
Flushing toilets

Roman aqueducts brought fresh water into towns and cities. This was completely new in Britain. There was the amazing luxury of public baths, even hot ones in the city of Bath. And we've certainly learnt the importance of another use for this water system – to flush away the sewage from toilets.



Newspapers

The first newspaper was created in 53 BC, on the orders of Julius Caesar. It was actually a 'newsstone', and people could read copies of it in public places.



Fast food

The Romans created large towns, and the soldiers passing through them wanted quick and easy food to eat on the move. The British began selling food from street stalls, using new foods and recipes the Romans brought with them. The minced meat 'patties' with bread and lettuce sound very like our modern hamburgers!



Calendars

We've continued to use the Roman year, with 365 days and a leap year every four years. The months of July and August are a living reminder of the Roman Emperors Julius and Augustus.

