The Roman Legacy [C1]

Scopriamo quali tracce ha lasciato l'arrivo dei Romani nella Britannia dell'Età del Ferro, analizzando l'evoluzione delle abitazioni, dell'agricoltura, della medicina e della legge.

Monty Python's The Life of Brian (1979) is one of the most famous comic films of all time. Set in Roman-occupied Judea, the film follows the **exploits** of Brian, whose life **mirrors** that of Jesus Christ. Brian decides to join the People's Front of Judea, an independent faction fighting against the Roman occupation. At one point in the film, Reg, a prominent member of the People's Front of Judea, asks his comrades the question "What have the Romans ever given us?". To Reg's irritation, several positive answers are offered up: aqueducts, **sanitation**, roads, irrigation, medicine, education, wine, public baths, law and order and, finally, peace.

COLCHESTER, ESSEX

The Life of Brian is set in the **Middle East**, but as so much evidence of sophisticated Roman construction and lifestyle remains in Britain, it is tempting to think that this invading army was a force for good in the lives of Iron Age Britons. To find out whether this was the case, Speak Up contacted Lois Garrod-Smith of Colchester Museum. Colchester in Essex occupies the site of Camulodunum, the first major city in Roman Britain. As Garrod-Smith explains, to understand how far ahead Roman engineers and architects were compared to the Iron Age Britons, it's a good idea to start with their homes.
Lois Garrod-Smith (English accent): The Iron Age Britons were living in round houses, constructed of **sticks** animal **manure** and **poo** and **straw roofs**. But the Romans, when they came over, they built villas, and villas that had underfloor **heating**, water built in. It was **worlds apart** really. The Iron Age Britons, before the Romans, were mainly doing their bathing in rivers, things like that. Whereas the Romans came over and they provided drinking water, public toilets, they brought **sewage** systems, which the Iron Age Britons didn't have before. And the Romans generally liked to keep

things clean. So towns and forts had underground **drains** to take away dirty water and **sewage**. **Drainpipeswere flushed** with water from the baths, so they didn't get too smelly. But on **the flip side** of that — we have lovely toilet paper and things like that today, that we **flush away** —, I'm afraid the Romans used a sponge on a stick, and everybody shared the same sponge and the same stick!

IRRIGATION SYSTEMS

The roads were a big **improvement** compared to what existed before, but so too were the irrigation systems that allowed for the development of new techniques in agriculture. **Lois Garrod-Smith**: The Iron Age Britons, their main role, job or what everybody did in Britain, was farming then, so I'm not necessarily sure the Romans brought that over. They did bring new things, new plants, one of which I've learned was **stinging nettles**. But the Iron Age Britons were farming, doing it well, they were exporting their goods as well to other people. So it's not necessarily all thanks to the Romans, they were pretty good at that… Wine before the Romans, it wasn't really drunk in England. They'd just started to import it a little bit before the Romans came along, but when the Romans arrived, the wine arrived. It was a big part of life and culture for the Romans and I genuinely believe that it's why we in England enjoy it so much today.

MEDICINE

We then asked Garrod-Smith to what extent the Romans improved Iron Age medicine. **Lois Garrod-Smith**: The Iron Age people before the Romans, they were quite superstitious. So for their medicine it would be a lot of herbs. They also had people called Druids, sort of like religious figures who were also **healers** that you would go and see if you were sick. The Romans, they didn't have particular figures, but they did have a similar thing in the herbs and the superstitions. But the Romans did have a better understanding of **surgery**. They had more knowl**edge** of the body.

LAW AND DISORDER

Iron Age Britain was a country of tribes, each one with its own leader and laws. The Romans had formal written laws with an Emperor **to oversee** them. So wherever the Romans went, they brought their own law and order. But did the Romans bring peace? **Lois Garrod-Smith**: I don't believe the Romans brought peace to Britain. They brought a lot of **upset** and they turned the Iron Age Britons' world upside down. They came over, they invaded, attacked, made the Iron Age Britons their slaves. For example, the temple that was built here in Colchester, that was built by slaves; it wasn't built by the Romans. They might have brought a sense of peace, in that everyone was terrified to say no, but that's not my version of peace. Peace is where everyone's getting on in harmony and treated equally, which was not the case. The Romans ruled with an **iron fist**.

TOP VI ROMAN SITES IN BRITAIN

I. Hadrian's Wall Begun around 122 AD during the reign of Emperor Hadrian, Hadrian's Wall is a large Roman fortification **that stretches** for 117 kilometres across the entire width of northern England. It served as a boundary marking the northern **edge** of Roman Britain and unconquered Caledonia to the north. A UNESCO **World Heritage site**since 1987, Hadrian's Wall is one of the best-known Roman ruins in England. **II. Burgh Castle** One of England's best-preserved Roman monuments is Burgh Castle in the Norfolk Broads. It was built in the 3rd century AD as part of the Roman network of coastal defences and its imposing stone walls — of which three survive almost to their original height — would have been around 4.5 metres high, **enclosing** an area of around 6 acres. **III. Roman Baths in Bath** The Roman baths in the heart of the city of Bath are some of the best-preserved Roman remains in the world. **Steaming hotsprings** underground supplied the baths with naturally-heated water and do so to this day. Although you can no longer bathe in the Roman baths, it is possible to visit the structure and **sample** Bath spa water in the famous Pump Room. **IV. Roman Lighthouse at Dover Castle** Dover Castle was started by Henry II in the 12th century, but a hill fort was first established in 800 BC and there are still some Roman ruins. Most notably, the **lighthouse**, or Roman pharos, which dates

back to 43 BC, is the most complete standing Roman building in England and one of only three Roman **lighthouse**s to survive from the entire Roman Empire. At one time, it was used as a **bell tower** for the Anglo-Saxon church, St. Mary in Castro, which stands nearby. **V. Roman Ruins of Colchester** Known as Britain's First City, Colchester is famous for its Roman ruins, including the remains of a Roman wall and a Roman road. In the past there were three theatres and a Roman chariot-racing circus. A guided tour of the iconic Colchester Castle will show you the foundations of the Temple of Claudius, **underneath**. **VI. Fishbourne Roman Palace** Dating from 75 AD, Fishbourne Roman Palace in Chichester is the largest Roman residence ever discovered north of the Alps. Although the palace was destroyed by fire in 279 AD, the site contains the largest collection of mosaics in situ in the UK as well as the earliest Roman gardens found anywhere in the country. www.cimuseums.org.uk

Glossary

- **heating** = riscaldamento
- **lighthouse** = faro
- **bell tower** = campanile
- **worlds apart** = essere mondi diversi
- **edge** = bordo, margine
- **springs** = sorgenti
- **sample** = provare
- **drains** = scarichi
- **flush away** = buttare nel gabinetto
- **improvement** = miglioramento
- **surgery** = chirurgia
- **underneath** = sotto
- **exploits** = imprese
- **Middle East** = Medio Oriente
- **manure** = letame
- **that stretches** = estendersi
- **Steaming hot** = fumante
- **mirrors** = rappresentare
- **sanitation** = servizi igienici
- **were flushed** = tirare lo sciacquone
- **healers** = guaritori
- **to oversee** = supervisionare
- **World Heritage site** = patrimonio dell'umanità
- **straw roofs** = tetti di paglia
- **stinging nettles** = ortiche
- **iron fist** = pugno di ferro
- **enclosing** = racchiudere
- **sticks** = ramoscelli, bastoncini
- **sewage** = acque di scolo, fogne
- **the flip side** = il rovescio della medaglia
- **poo** = cacca
- **Drainpipes** = tubi di scarico
- **upset** = turbamento