

Roman Boy.

My name is Maximus and I live in a very large town called Venta Silurum in Western Britannia. Venta Silurum is in the Western part of Britannia not far from Isca, a large Roman Army base.

Work

My parents have a very successful shop in the middle of the town and we sell olive oil, wine and foods from all over the known world such as walnuts, figs and dates.

We live outside of the town in our villa, a large low square house, surrounded by farmland. We sell lots of what we grow and make on our farm in the shop.

My family/Clothes

Most of the time I wear a very simple, belted woollen tunic and leather sandals. I also wear a lucky charm around my neck called a bulla. This was given to me when I was born and I won't take it off until I'm 16. It will protect me from evil spirits for the rest of my life.

My sister's name is Heulwen and she's 11 years old, two years older than me. She doesn't have a bulla, she has a necklace called a lunula that is the same shape as a new moon and she'll wear it until she gets married. Her clothes are very similar to my mother's and she wears her hair in a knot at the back of her neck.

Most of the time, my dad wears a short linen tunic and a simple woollen cloak but if he's going somewhere special then he wears his heavy toga that his servant helps him to arrange in lots of folds. He doesn't wear any jewellery except for his ring. Whenever he sends someone a message he seals the letter with a blob of wax and presses his ring into it so that they'll know who sent it.

My mother is called Awen and she belongs to the Silurian tribe of Celts. When the Roman army first arrived in Britannia, her tribe were very angry and fought long and hard to get rid of them. That's not the case any more and the Silures people and the Romans live very happily together.

My mother wears a long tunic, which reaches almost to the ground. On top of this she wears a stola, a dress belted at the waist and on top of that she wears a woollen cloak made from the sheep's wool from our farm. My mother loves lots of expensive jewellery because she is such a show off!

The Town

The town has a large wall around it and you enter it through a large gate. It has straight streets and neat rows of buildings and shops where you can buy anything. A jeweller works in the shop next door making jewellery with gold from West Britannia and next to him is a man who will make a mosaic floor for your house in any shape, pattern or picture that you want. We have big buildings in our town because my dad says that we use concrete and this stops them from falling down.

In the middle of the town there's an open square with colonnades called a forum or civic centre. From here my father can enter the basilica, or town hall. My father is quite rich now and also, because he married my mother who belongs to the

Silurian tribe of Celts who used to rule this area before the Romans, he has a seat on the town council.

Dinner Parties

Sometimes my parents will invite friends to stay in our villa outside of town. They have great parties that often last up to eight hours. The adults lay on sloping couches situated around a square table; my sister and I have to sit on the floor.

We eat with our fingers and our servants and slaves cut our food into bite sized pieces. Our hands get quite sticky when we eat so the slaves wash our hands throughout the dinner.

We always eat lots of meat. My dad likes wild goat but I like roasted dormice. My mother's favourite meat is chicken and my sister loves picking the bones of pigeons, doves and peacocks.

My parents and their friends drink too much wine at these parties and keep me awake with their noise well into the morning.

Public Baths.

My parents go to the bathhouse every day to wash, chat, exercise and relax but they don't go at the same time. There's an exercise area, a cold area and hot steam rooms. It's very warm in the baths because the floors are heated from underneath by long pipes carrying hot air from a fire under the building.

The bathhouse has a lot of slaves working there, heating water, carrying towels and helping to clean the bathers. The way they do this is to rub the bathers with olive oil and then scrape it off (with any dirt) with a special scraper called a strigil.

Public Entertainment

Just outside the town we have an amphitheatre, an open air round theatre, where my parents sometimes take me to see gladiators fighting each other and fighting very fierce animals too.

My father's time in the army

My father is called Augustinus and he comes from a country called Gaul. On his 20th birthday, he joined the army. They were glad to have my dad because he was very good at shooting bows and arrows and flinging stones from slingshots. While in the army he learned to build very straight roads and really strong walls. He was paid in gold coins and sometimes a part of his wages was paid in salt.

My father met my mother when he was still a soldier based in Isca but they couldn't marry until he'd left the army after 25 years. The Roman Emperor gave him money and land when he did leave and he settled here so that my mother could be near her family.

Weapons

My dad wore armour made from strips of iron and leather (lorica segmentata). On his head he has a metal helmet (galea) and he carried a huge curved shield to protect his body (scutum).

He also carried a short sword for stabbing (gladius) a dagger (pugio) and two long spears called javelins with a sharp iron points for throwing (pilum).

My dad also said that he was trained to work the giant catapult machine (onager) that could fire rocks or balls of burning tar. Some of the soldiers were also trained to work the big wind-up crossbows (ballista).

Food

My dad sells lots of different foods in his shop. Some of the things he grows on our farm. My mother says that her grandmother had never seen half of the foods until the Romans came to Britannia. Things like:- peas, garlic, onions, carrots, cucumbers, shallots, leeks, cabbages, celery, turnips, radishes and asparagus.

I'm glad that the Romans brought walnuts and sweet chestnuts because they are my favourites. My sister loves the big juicy apples, grapes and cherries.

One of the most popular sauces that my dad sells is a salty sauce made from gone off fish guts called liquamen or garum. My mother tells the cook to put it on everything!

Transport

My grandmother is very important and in the town her slaves move her about in a litter that looks like a bed with four handles, one in each corner. My father says that there's nothing better than using your own two feet to get around. We use a wagon pulled by the mules we have on the farm. My dad also uses the wagon to send goods into the town to sell in the market.

From our farm we can see the sea and in the Summer months I love to watch the barges and ships coming in to port with goods from all over the Roman Empire such as glass bottles filled with perfume and large pots called amphorae full of oil and wine. My mother has started to collect the red bowls made in Gaul called Samian ware. Not many people can afford this china, as it's so expensive.

Religion

My mother and father both worship the Gods but they have different names for them. My father calls the war god Mars while my mother calls him Ocelus. Sometimes my parents will go by boat to Aquae Sulis with friends. They have a very big bathhouse there for the goddess Minerva who my mother calls Sulis.

We have a little altar or shrine in our home dedicated to the *Lars Familiaris* who protect us. We pray every day to these spirits. On special days we hang garlands of flowers over the hearth and make simple gifts of incense and wine. On our shrine at home, there are two wooden figures. One is a bearded man who is meant to be my father and the other one is a woman that looks like Juno, the mother goddess.