

SPECTACULAR  
VISUAL GUIDES

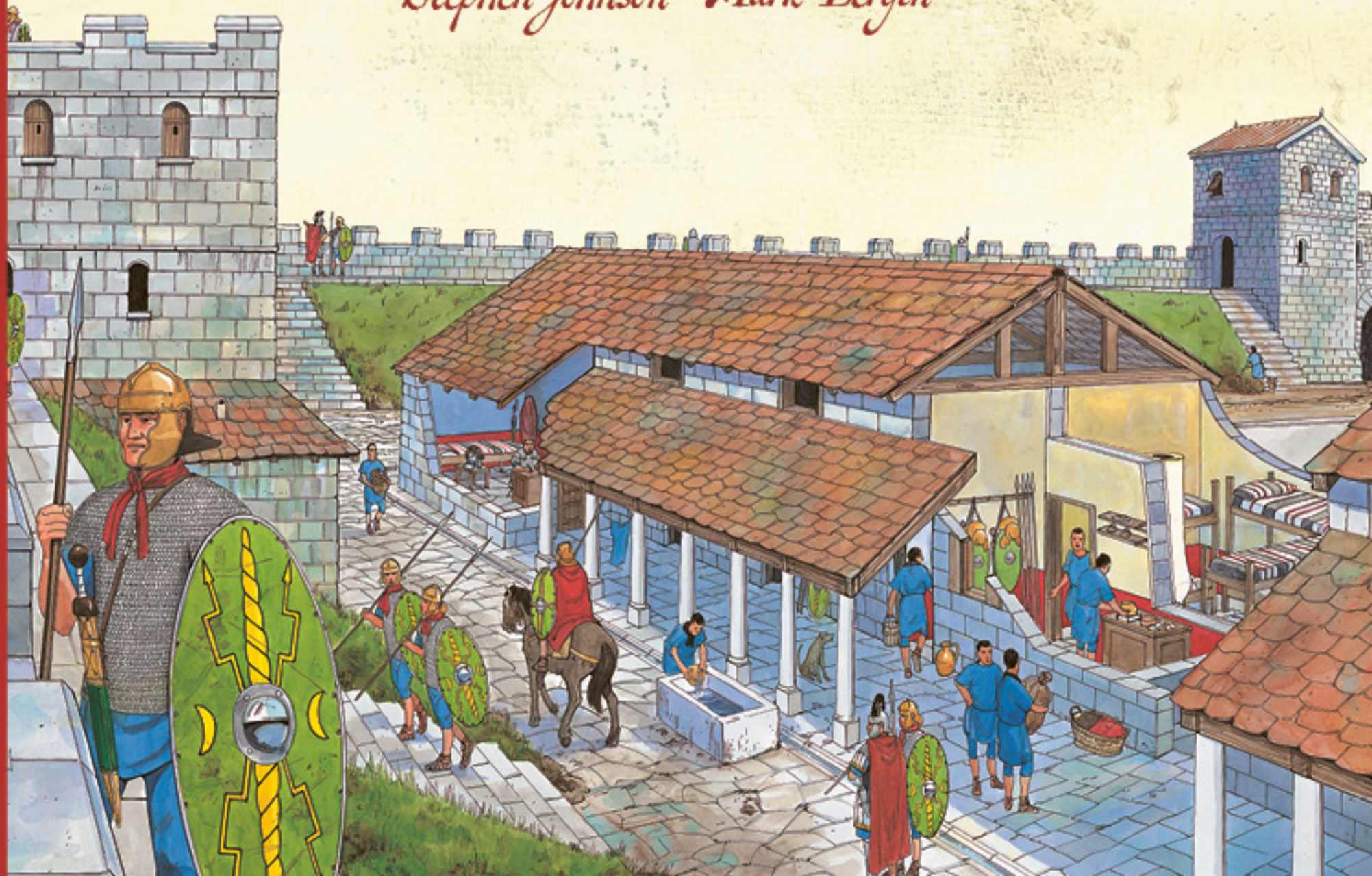


# AN ANCIENT ROMAN FORT

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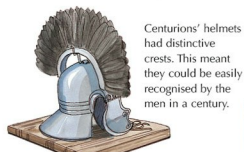
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# THE BARRACKS

Water was precious so rainwater was collected from the roofs of buildings in tanks like this (above). As well as providing water for washing and cooking, the sides of the stone tank could be used to sharpen knives and swords.

A fort for a cohort of around 500 soldiers would have had six barrack blocks, each containing the living-space for a century of 80 men. Plans that have been discovered show that barrack blocks were long and narrow, with the living quarters for the centurion in command at one end. In some parts of the Empire, barracks for the troops had two storeys. The barracks had foundations of stone and the upper parts had a framework of wood, filled in with rubble and plastered over. The building would have been roofed in tiles, stone slates, or wooden shingles, depending on what materials were available locally.



Centurions' helmets had distinctive crests. This meant they could be easily recognised by the men in a century.



Centurion's quarters

The centurion had a suite of rooms to himself, including a separate bedroom and living room. Parts of his quarters may have been used as offices or storerooms.



Auxiliary soldiers' quarters

The living quarters for the troops were cramped, with 8 men in two small rooms. One was used for sleeping, the other for their equipment, some of which took up a lot of space.

## GETTING DRESSED



An auxiliary soldier's uniform was not 'standard issue', but the first item put on over the undergarments was usually a woolen tunic.



Over the tunic, chain mail might have been worn to protect the upper arms and body. This could reach as far as the knees and was heavy!



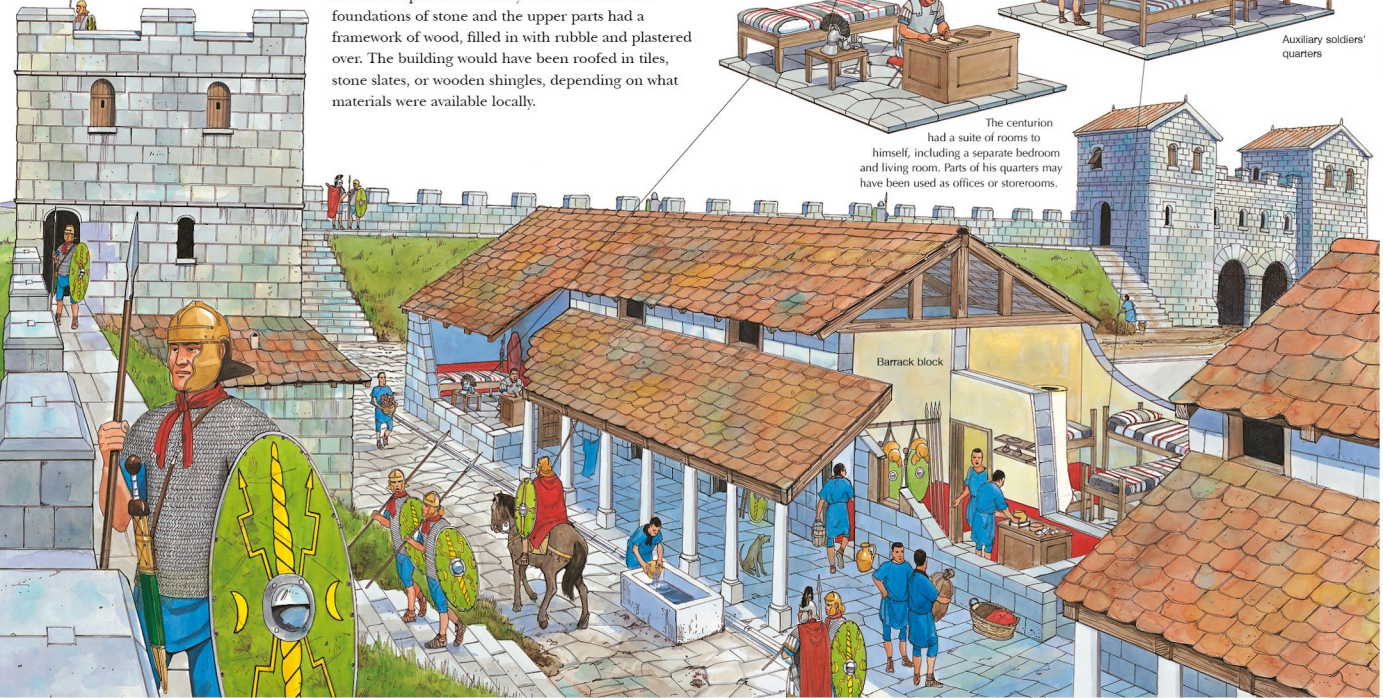
Troops wore leather sandals on their feet; their soles reinforced with iron studs. In colder climates, soldiers wore chunky woolen socks.



There were several different designs of helmet, but they normally protected against sword cuts on the cheeks and the neck.



Shields had different patterns for different units and were oval or rectangular.

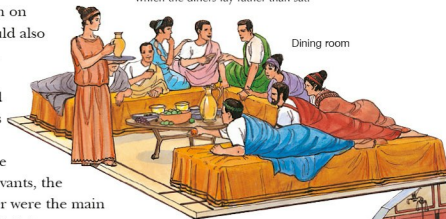


# FORT COMMANDER'S HOUSE

The Fort Commander lived in grand style, close to the centre of the fort and normally next to the headquarters building. Commanders' families often accompanied them on military service and every commander would also bring servants with him, as well as his own soldiers, to carry out domestic tasks. This house (right) has a central open courtyard with a series of rooms opening off it and is divided into three areas. A single-storeyed section with a main entrance contained the stables, rooms for the male and female servants, the kitchen and a small toilet. In the far corner were the main living quarters. The dining room and family living rooms were on the ground floor, with bedrooms upstairs. In colder parts of the Empire, the downstairs rooms had under-floor hypocaust heating (see p. 21). The third section housed a small private bath suite for the commander and his family.

The commander would have had his meals at his house. Servants baked bread in the small oven and there were supplies of meat, vegetables, dried foods and oil to the fort. The commander might also have brought in additional delicacies, such as Italian wine, not available to the troops.

The dining room was laid out in traditional style (below). A low table in the middle of the room was surrounded on three sides by couches on which the diners lay rather than sat.



Dining room



Kitchen

## A DINNER PARTY



The dining room was cleaned and well-prepared for an important visitor such as a provincial governor.



The guests, commanders of nearby forts and their wives, began to arrive.



As soon as they had been greeted, the guests washed their hands before eating.



The first course was served: oysters were brought from the coast and served with other seafood.



Servants set out the dishes for each course. The diners took their seats, in strict order of rank, at the table.



The best wines came from Italy and were concentrated, so they had to be diluted with water before being drunk.



Venison for the main course. The deer may have been killed by the commander himself in the local forest.



At Rome dinner parties, guests made themselves sick between courses to make room for more food! On the frontier, the meals were more modest.



Local fruits, together with delicacies like figs and grapes brought specially from other areas were served for dessert.



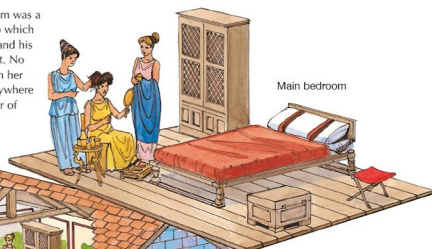
The governor would have stayed in the commander's house, but other guests might have slept at the hotel in the settlement.



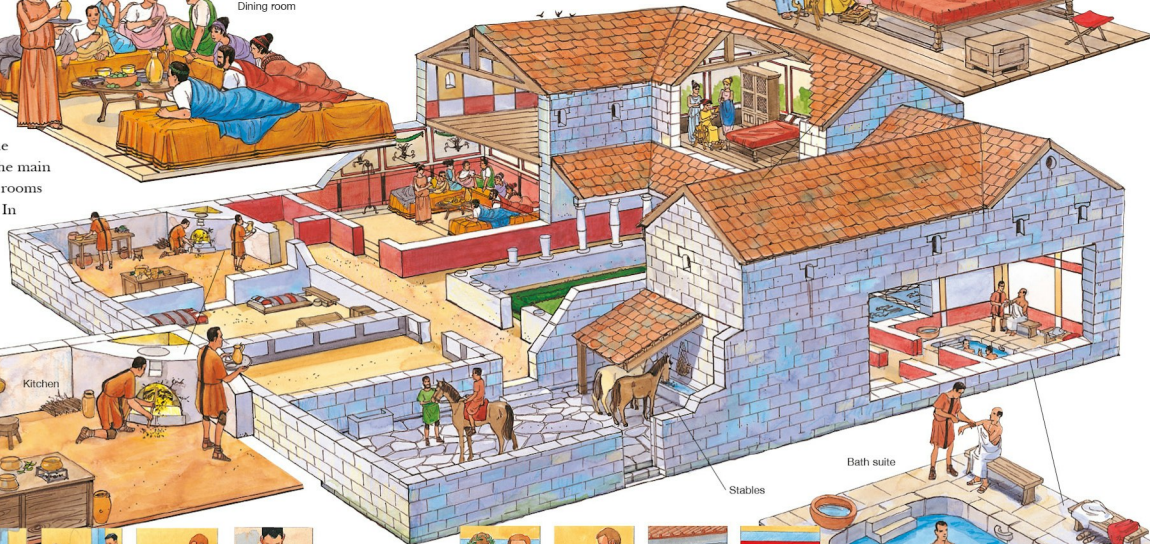
The servants had to clear up in time for an early breakfast.

A commander always had a supply of fresh horses available in the stables (below) in case he needed to go somewhere quickly.

The main bedroom was a private room into which the commander and his wife could retreat. No Roman woman in her position went anywhere without a number of female servants.



Main bedroom



Stables

Bath suite

The private bath suite was for the use of the commander, his family and invited guests.

## TYPICAL DUTIES



Duty lists that have been found show guard duty was an everyday task. The day was split into a number of periods to go on watch.



Centurions did not have to clean their own rooms or equipment – one of their troops did this and carried out the duties of a personal servant.



Settlement market places needed policing. There may have been disputes over short measures, theft or simple matters of law and order.



An extra pair of hands in the workshops to help the smiths repair wheels, axles or other parts of carts and wagons would have been appreciated!



It was a continuous job to keep the baths' furnaces going and stocked with wood.

# KEEPING A CLEAN FORT

A huge amount of work was needed to keep a fort of 500 men running smoothly. Lists of soldiers' duties which survive show the types of tasks that soldiers had to do. The discipline imposed on the troops by their superiors was tough and some were well-known for their unpleasantness to their men. Punishments for disobedience or attempted desertion of the army could be severe. If men were caught running away they could be executed, though it was rare that a commander would insist on this.

Tending to the fort's animals was a major operation. Most sections of the army relied on horses, donkeys and mules to carry food, supplies and heavy equipment.



Pitchfork

Specialist cleaners might be found in the fort settlement, but most soldiers had to wash their own underclothes and keep their bedding clean. Only the centurion had a 'batman' to do it all for him.



Washing clothes and bedding

Rubbish disposal was always a problem. Sometimes a pit was dug at the foot of the rampart where kitchen refuse could be dumped. Rubbish was also carried outside the fort and dumped there. If it was not cleared, it attracted rats and other vermin.



Waste disposal

Cleaning the toilets must have been the worst duty and was also used as a punishment. It constantly needed doing, particularly if the water running through the toilets became blocked.



Cleaning the toilet block

## ARMY DISCIPLINE



Centurions carried a staff of vine-wood, which they used occasionally! If you were guilty of a minor offence, you might be made to stand all day holding a pole!



Pay could be deducted if a unit had appeared cowardly in battle. Soldiers could be put on half pay for a year for serious offences.



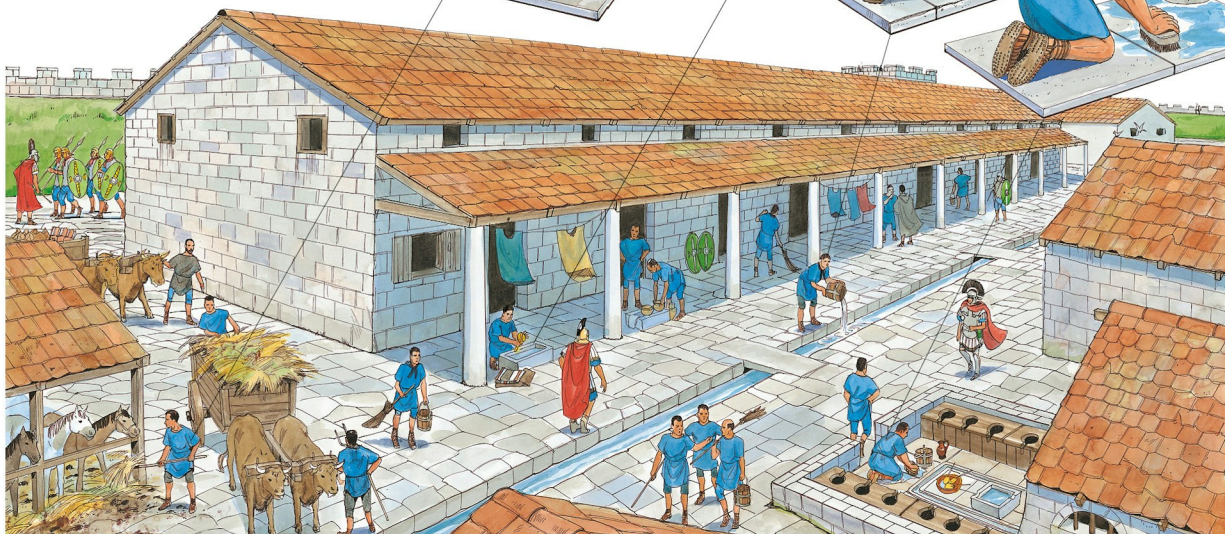
A reduction in rank could be imposed on an officer who had deserted or mutilated.



Extra duties were imposed for more minor offences. These had to be done in addition to the normal range of duties.



In the most serious cases of desertion, mutiny or failing to obey orders, the punishment was execution.

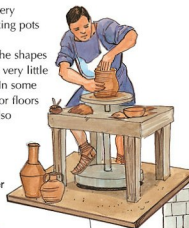


# THE SETTLEMENT

Outside most forts lay a settlement of houses, shops, workshops and temples. Among these buildings was the hotel (mansio) in which official travellers, taking messages from fort to fort, could sleep overnight. Wherever the Roman army settled, the presence of soldiers with money to spend attracted traders offering goods and services of many kinds. Local industries selling clothes, leather goods, food or glass and metalware sprang up in many places. Although Roman soldiers were not officially allowed to marry while on active service, those who were permanently stationed in a garrison sometimes had unofficial wives and families living nearby.

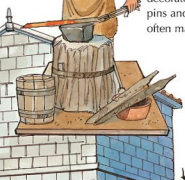
Locally made pottery tended to be cooking pots and mixing bowls in grey or white, the shapes of which changed very little over many years. In some settlements, tiles for floors and roofs might also have been made.

Potter



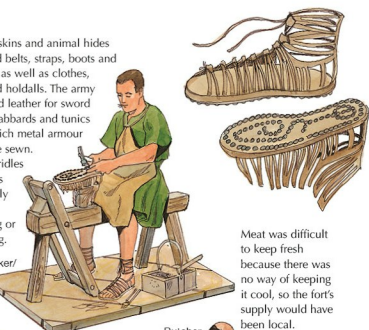
Blacksmith

Blacksmiths provided a wide range of tools and implements for everyday use – everything from a pair of tweezers to a pickaxe. Bronze work was especially important, as decorated belt-buckles, pins and brooches were often made of it.



Leather skins and animal hides provided belts, straps, boots and sandals, as well as clothes, bags and holdalls. The army also used leather for sword belts, scabbards and tunics onto which metal armour could be sewn. Horse bridles and tents constantly needed repairing or replacing.

Leather worker/cobbler



Meat was difficult to keep fresh because there was no way of keeping it cool, so the fort's supply would have been local.

Butcher



The inn

The inn would have served a range of wine, depending on what was available – the best wine from Italy or Gaul or sour wine watered down to make it drinkable (just). The inn might also have provided bread and ‘fast food’ – perhaps a stew-pot of beans, chickpeas, pork or bacon.