

EPISODE I

Segment 1

I. Before you watch the segment study the following words and word-combinations to facilitate your understanding:

worth the conquest

oysters were abundant

at the edge of the world

a thriving, bustling community

remains of Stone Age life

to seem rather snug

shockingly familiar glimpses of ancient

given the rudimentary nature of their

domestic life

tool

to be miraculously preserved

to be concerned about

sandstone slabs

Orkadian hoi polloi

to live cheek by jowl

to enjoy stable environment

It's not too much of a crash

in keeping with

II. Answer the following questions:

1. How did the Romans see Britannia?
2. What would the Romans have seen in Britannia if they had been able to travel in time and space?
3. What impressive Neolithic sites, miraculously preserved, can be found on the western coast of Orkney's mainland?
4. What evidence proves that the people of Skara Brae had culture and style?

III. Watch the Segment and fill in the gaps with the words from the box:

Ferocious, a blanket, in other words, biting, complete, fitted into, stout, hearty, self-sufficient, cheek by jowl, green, miraculously

Perched on the western coast of Orkney's island, a village called Skara Brae. Here, beneath and area no bigger than the 18th _____ of a golf course lies Europe's most _____

Neolithic community, _____ preserved for 5,000 years under _____ of sand and grass until uncovered in 1850 by a _____ sea storm. This is recognizable village. Neatly _____ its landscape between pasture and sea, intimate, domestic and _____. And, although technically still in the Stone Age and Neolithic period, these are not huts, they're true houses, built from sandstone slabs that lie all around the island and gave _____ protection to villagers here at Skara Brae from their _____ Orcadian winds. The villagers were real neighbors, living _____, their houses connected by walled, sometimes decorated alleyways. It's not too much of a stretch to imagine gossip travelling down these alleys after a _____ seafood supper. We have _____ everything you could possibly want from a village, except a church and a pub.

Segment II.

I. Make sure you know the following words and word-combinations:

To enjoy stable environment	growing need of protection
To be abandoned	the elements
Drifting sands	hill forts
A protracted struggle	lofty seats of power
During the reign	rampart
A spectacular difference	daunting walls
	Panicky retreat

II. Check your understanding of the Segment:

1. What changes happened all over the British landscape by 1,999 BC?
2. What figures prove that Britain was a crowded island in the Iron Age?
3. What spectacular difference from the little village of Skara Brae comes as no surprise?
4. What was the designation of great windowless towers sprung up around the Islands?

III. Are the following statements TRUE or FALSE?

1. In 2,500 BC, the island climate doesn't seem to have got colder and wetter.
2. All over the British landscape, a protracted struggle for food and land was taking place.

3. We now think that not so many people lived on this land as 2,500 years later.
4. Great windowless tower were built after the Roman invasion.
5. Great hill forts were defended by rings of earthworks, timber and ramparts.

Segment 3

I. These word-combinations will facilitate understanding of the Segment:

to crash into	taken together
expanding society	alluring world
endearingly melancholy in expression	to be spellbindingly reminiscent of
like so many Eeyores	to scoop out
tribal manufacture	sacrificial offerings
to ship wares	grisly brutality of the druids
in return	to take notes of
the back of beyond	warning of vengeance to come
to be separated by custom and language	to have much to do

II. Answer the following questions:

1. Iron Age Britain was a dynamic, expanding society, wasn't it?
2. What spectacular metalwork came from the workshops of craftsmen?
3. Where did warriors, druid priests and artists of Iron Age Britain ship their goods?
4. What proves that Iron Age Britain was not the back of beyond?
5. What pieces of art could the Romans see in Britain?

III. Explain the statement:

Iron Age Britain was definitely not the back of beyond.

IV. Insert the missing words from the box:

Alarming cults, haunting, sliced off, refinement, warning, savages, alluring, reminiscent, sacrifice offerings, a civilization, glittering, devotional

So the Romans would have known all about this strange but _____ world of fat cattle and busy forges. Evidence of its _____ would have found its way to Rome. Along with the _____ metal ware came stories of _____ cult, which may have prompted the usual Roman dinner time discussions. "All are very interesting, I dare say, but would we really want to call them _____?" Supposing they would have seen an ancient sculpture, like this _____ stone face with its archaic secretive smile, the eyes closed as if in sun, mysterious _____ devotional trance. The nose flattened, the cheeks broad, the whole thing so spellbindingly _____ of things the Romans must have seen in Etruria or the Greek Islands. Would they then have said, "Yes, this is a work of art"? Would probably not. Sooner or later they would have noticed that the top of the head is _____, scooped out, like a boiled egg for breakfast, to hold _____. Then they would have remembered stories that the Romans told about the grisly brutality of druids. Perhaps they would have even taken note of the stories told by the northern _____ themselves, of decapitated heads who were said to speak _____, warning the vengeance to come.

EPISODE II

Segment 1

I. Study the following words and word-combinations:

To run the gauntlet	a brilliant strategy of stick and carrot
A lure for treasure	an undefended oppida
In heaps	to strike at heart
What Roman generals craved the most	to hunger for a taste
To queue up to surrender	to fall in line
On the first go	to be fit for a Roman
A club-foot stammerer	on which side the bread is buttered
To reckon	in one's pursuit for power and status

II. Comprehension check:

1. Why did the Romans come to the British Islands?
2. When did Julius Caesar make the first attempt to land his legions in Britannia?
3. Why was Julius Caesar blown right back to the Continent?

4. Why did Claudius succeed where Julius Caesar failed?
5. How could Claudius melt the resistance of the Britons?

III. Extend the following statements:

1. For these chieftains sensible enough to reach for the olive branch rather than the battle javelin, Claudius had another plan.
2. All over Britain were rulers who thought a Romanian connection would do more good than harm in their pursuit for power and status.

Segment 2

I. Make sure you know these words:

incredible stupidity	implacable anger
on the part of	to be seriously out of luck
in a show of arrogance and brutality	sparkling imperial city
to declare East Anglia a slave province	to have a revenge
to make a point about	to be match for the legions
to be treated to	a slaughter
to rise up in furious revolt	to deliver a speech
to suppress an insurgency	to make a desolation
to fall back	a burning sentiment
	an insurrection

II. Now let's check the comprehension of the Segment:

1. Why did Queen Boudicca embody British national resistance to Rome?
2. How did Boudicca take her revenge on the Romans?
3. How did Boudicca's great insurrection end?
4. Did the first anti-imperialistic speech delivered on Scotland's soil entirely belong to the Caledonian general, Calgacus?

III. Listen to the speech delivered by Calgacus and try to render it.

Segment 3

- I. **Watch Segment 3 and complete the sentences with the words and expressions from the box and learn them:**

To do business, impermeable barrier, to peer, to be studded, to go to and fro, astonishing finds, at any rate, to settle down, scraps, to make sense, sacred spring, mod con, painstakingly

1. It _____ to talk about Roman-British culture, and not just as a colonial veneer imposed on the resentful natives.
2. The purpose of these forts became not to prevent people going _____, so much as to control and observe them.
3. We tend to think of the Romans rather like US cavalymen deep in Indian country, defending the flag, _____ through the cracks and waiting nervously for war drums and smoke signals.
4. But as Britain _____ in the second century AD, these places became up-country hill stations more like social centres.
5. He didn't mean it as _____ against _____ from the north.
6. But the spiritual place was the _____ – a Ferny grotto.
7. They are _____ of Roman correspondence, jotting, scribblings and drafts of letters thrown away as rubbish almost 2,000 years ago
8. He of course was destined, in Britain _____, to be remembered by a wall.
9. The fort in particular, became a place where a kind of customs scam was imposed on those trying _____.
10. Bath was at once _____ and mysterious cult, therapy and luxury, a marvel of hydrolic engineering.
11. The Wall _____ with mile castles and turrets and forts.
12. Up they have come, lovingly separated from dirt, debris and each other and _____ deciphered.
13. Our sense of what life was like at that time, has been transformed by one of the most _____ of recent archaeology – the so-called Vindolanda Tablets.

- II. **Be ready to answer the following questions:**

1. What buildings are the best evidence of Romano-British culture as a genuine fusion?
2. What other places can you describe besides Bath where Romano-Britons could wallow?

Segment 4

I. **Be aware of the following words while watching this Segment:**

to undermine	to spot
political turmoil	can't help but
a scale of threat	vulnerability
to be detached from	to prop up
a defensive stronghold	to give way to
to make clear	to pledge to return

II. **Make sure you can answer the following questions:**

1. In what troubles was Rome by the 4th century?
2. How did Dover's significance for Britannia change?
3. Why did Picts and Saxons start their raids from the north to the east of Britannia?
4. Could the Romano-British handle the chill vulnerability in Britannia after the exit of the legions?

III. **Decide whether the following statements are TRUE or FALSE:**

1. Britannia could remain detached from the fate of the rest of the empire.
2. The fortifications like those of Portchester or Hadrian's Wall could work without adequate troops.
3. Picts and Saxons, spotting the weakness, started their own raids.
4. When in the year 410, Rome was sacked the last two legions remained in Britannia.

EPISODE 3

Segment 1.

- I. **Study the following words and word-combinations to better understand the Segment while watching it:**

to head for	a faux pas
a hoard	to turn the lights out on Roman Britannia
to exploit a vacuum	an annihilation
seem a boon	to poise
as per a contract	Anglo-Saxon beginnings
spectacular blunders	to stay pagan
to be stiffed	to hanker after
to take land in lieu of pay	a blood feud
	a conversion

II. Answer the following questions:

1. What treasure is among the best exhibits of the British Museum now?
2. Who fill the vacuum of power left by the exit of the legions?
3. Was the process of adaptation of Roman Britannia to an inevitable emergence of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms gradual?
4. In what three parts was the island divided?
5. Which religion did the Scottish tribes advocate?
6. In what way did the German tribal culture differ from that of the Roman?

III. Fill in the missing words from the box below:

Poised, the bath house, fall apart, evidence, threatened, paving, phantom, spacious, threadbare, demolish, Roman lifestyle

Here at Wroxeter, in Shopshire, the Roman Veraconium, there's wonderful _____ of this made-to-do, hybride, improvised world _____ between Roman ruins and Anglo-Saxon beginnings. When _____ stopped functioning, the citizens here just took the tiles and used them for _____. When the roof of the great basilica _____ to fall in, the citizens simply went and _____ the whole building themselves. Inside the sell they put up a new timber structure _____ and elegant enough to give them the sense they were still living some sort of _____, although in an increasingly phantom Britannia. Eventually the adaptations became even more makeshift, the fabric of Roman life increasingly _____, until it did _____ altogether.

Segment 2

- I. **Study and learn the words and word-combinations to better understand the Segment:**

Cristian gospel	consummate storyteller
remotely Irish	to conjure up
to be kidnapped	a clinching moment of persuasion
to be ordained	to escape one's sight
a messenger of the gospel	It was crucial
to be perfectly matched with	a foreboding
an encampment for God	a famine
a dragon slayer	

- II. **Comprehension check:**

1. Which part of ancient Britain was never touched by Roman rule?
2. What religion was preached in Ireland?
3. Who was the most famous of the early missionaries of the Roman Saxon church?
4. What made Bede a brilliant propagandist of the early church?
5. What was crucial for Bede and St Wilfred?
6. What was Bede's foreboding?

- III. **Read the following extract from the film and interpret the Anglo-Saxon chronicle:**

"Dire portents appeared over Northumbria. Immense whirlwinds and flashes of lightning and fiery dragons were seen flying through the air. A great famine followed. A little after that, on the 8th of June, the ravages of heathen men miserably destroyed God's church at Lindisfarne".

Segment 3

IY Extend the statement: "If you look at long enough and hard enough at almost any culture you'll find something good to say about it".

I. **Study and learn the following words:**

To be distressed at	inadvertently
a nasty attitude	in addition to
rapid-transit, long-distance commercial travelers	to accomplish, what left to themselves a common foe
to cut much ice with	a semblance of alliance
to be keen on	to harness Anglo-Saxon energy
strike hard and fierce	
on the positive side	
to smash the power	

II. **Answer the questions below to check your understanding:**

1. What do the historians make us think of the Vikings' culture?
2. What other kinds of merchandise were the Vikings keen on?
3. Why do the historians believe the Vikings created England?
4. What properties did someone need to possess to push back the Vikings and repair the terrible damages the Vikings had done?

III. **Give your reasoning on the statement:**

"If you look long enough and hard enough at almost any culture you'll find something good to say about it".

Segment 4

I. **Make sure you know the following words and word-combinations:**

The hero on the run	to piece together
Up against steep odds	take command of
It happens to be true	to be acclaimed as the sovereign lord
To send on a mission	to become conceivable and even desirable
A reinvention of the English monarchy	in the imperial purple
Apt qualities for	the sacred sites
A bequest for prosperity	In a literary sense
Stunning works	to seem imminent
To get ahead	the entirety of Anglo-Saxon England

A devastating blow

to turn the tide against

To get ahead of

II. Comprehension check:

1. What was Alfred's life story?
2. What did England get through Alfred?
3. What contribution to the British literature did Alfred make?
4. What were the outcomes of the decisive battle held by Alfred on the borders of Wiltshire and Somerset?
5. What vision of Britain's place in the world did Alfred see?
6. Who became the first King of England?

III. Extend the following statements. Make a 5-minute speech on them:

1. *"England has been conceived, not yet born ..."*
2. *"For a generation or two it did look as though the grafting of Anglo-Saxon culture onto the enduring legacy of Roman Britain had produced an extraordinary flowering".*

A HISTORY OF BRITAIN

Part I. Beginnings

Episode 1

Segment 1

00:00:09,855→

Introduction

From the earliest days, Britain was the object of desire. Tacitus declared it “pretium victoriae” – “worth the conquest”, the best compliment that could occur to a Roman. He had never visited these shores but was nonetheless convinced that Britannia was rich in gold. Silver was abundant too. Apparently so were pearls, though Tacitus had heard they were grey, like the overcast, rain-heavy skies, and the natives only collected them when cast up on the shore.

As far as the Roman historians were concerned, Britannia may be off at the edge of the world, but it was off the edge of their world, not in a barbarian wilderness. If those writers had been able to travel in time as well as space to the northernmost of our islands, the Orcades – our modern Orkney – they would have seen something much more astonishing than heaps of pearls: Signs of civilization thousands of years older than Rome.

There are remains of Stone Age life all over Britain and Ireland. But nowhere as abundantly as Orkney with its mounds, graves, and its great circles of standing stones like here at Brodgar. Vast, imposing and utterly unknowable. Orkney has another Neolithic site, that is in its way even more impressive than Brodgar, the last thing you would expect from the Stone Age, a shockingly familiar glimpse of ancient domestic life.

Perched on the western coast of Orkney's main island, a village called Skara Brae. Here, beneath an area no bigger than the 18th green of a golf course lies Europe's most complete Neolithic community, miraculously preserved for 5,000 years under a blanket of sand and grass until uncovered in 1850 by a ferocious sea storm. This is a recognizable village. Neatly fitted into its landscape between pasture and sea, intimate, domestic and self-sufficient. And, although technically still the Stone Age and Neolithic period, these are not huts, they're true

houses, built from sandstone slabs that lie all around the island and gave stout protection to villagers here at Skara Brae from their biting Orcadian winds. The villagers were real neighbors, living cheek by jowl, their houses connected by walled, sometimes decorated alleyways. It's not too much of a stretch to imagine gossip travelling down those alleys after a hearty seafood supper. We have in other words everything you could possibly want from a village, except a church and a pub. In 3,000 BC, the sea and air were a little warmer than they are now. Once they'd settled in their sandstone houses, they could harvest red sea bream and mussels and oysters that were abundant in the shallows. Cattle gave them meat and milk and dogs were kept for hunting and company.

During the Neolithic centuries there would have been at least a dozen houses here, half-dug into the ground for comfort and safety. A thriving, bustling little community of 50 or 60. But a real miracle of Skara Brae is that these houses were not mere shelters. They were built by people who had culture, who had style. And here's where they showed off that style.

A fully equipped, all-purpose Neolithic living room, complete with luxuries and necessities. Well, at the centre, a hearth around which they warmed themselves and cooked their food. A stone tank in which to keep live fish bait. Some houses have drains underneath them, so they must have had, believe it or not, indoor toilets. Luxuries? Well, the orthopaedically correct stone bed may not seem particularly luxurious, but the additional layer of heather and straw would have softened the sleeping surface and would have made this bed seem rather snug. At the centre of it all was this spectacular dresser on which our house-proud villagers would have set out all their most precious stuff. Fine bone and ivory necklaces, beautifully carved stone objects, everything designed to make a grand interior statement.

Given the rudimentary nature of their tools, it would have taken the villagers countless man hours to build not just only these domestic dwellings but the great circles of stone where they would have gathered to worship.

Skara Brae was not just an isolated settlement of fishers and farmers. It people must have belonged to some larger society, one sophisticated enough to mobilize the army of toilers and craftsmen needed, not just to make these monuments, but to stand them on end. And they were just as concerned about housing for the dead as for living. The mausoleum at Maes Howe, a couple of miles from Skara Brae, seems no more than a swelling on the grassy landscape. But this is, as it were, a British pyramid and in keeping with our taste for understatement, it reserves all its impact for the interior.

Imagine them open once more. A detail from a village given the job of pulling back the stone seals, lugging the body through the low opening in the earth. Up 36 feet of narrow, tight-fitting passageway, lit only once a year by the rays of the winter solstice. A death canal, constriction, smelling of the underworld. Finally the passageway opens up into this stupendous high-vaulted masonry chamber. Some of these tombs would have been elaborately decorated with carvings in the form of circles or spirals, like waves or the breeze-pushed clouds. Others would have had neat little stores or cubicles where the bodies would be laid out on shelves. The grandest of these tombs had openings cut in the wall, to create side chambers where the most important bodies could be laid in aristocratic spaciousness like family vaults in a country church. Unlike medieval knights there, these grandees were buried with eagles and dogs, or even treasure. The kind of things that the Vikings who broke into these tombs thousands of years later were quick to filch. In return, though, these early tomb raiders left their own legacy. This wonderful graffiti. These runes were carved by the most skilled rune carver in the western ocean: "I bedded Thorny here." "Ingegirth is one horny bitch." As for Orcadian hoi polloi, they ranked space in a common chamber, on a floor carpeted with bones of hundreds of their predecessors. A crowded waiting room to their afterworld. For centuries, life at Skara Brae must have continued in much the same way. But around 2,500 BC, the island climate seems to have got colder and wetter. The red beem disappeared and so did the stable environment the Orcadians had enjoyed for countless generations. Fields were abandoned, the farmers and fishers migrated, leaving their stone buildings and tombs to be covered by layers of peat, drifting sand and finally grass. The mainland too, of course, had its burial chambers, like the long barrow at West Kennet. There were also the great stone circles, the largest at Avebury. But the most spectacular of all – at Stonehenge.

Segment 2

00:11:12,375→

By 1,000 BC, things were changing up fast. All over the British landscape, a protracted struggle for good land was taking place. Forests were cleared so that Iron Age Britain was not, as it was once romantically imagined, an unbroken forest kingdom stretching from Cornwall to Inverness. It was rather a patchwork of open fields, dotted here and there with copses giving cover for games, especially wild pigs. And it was a crowded island. We now think that as many

people lived on this land as during the reign of Elizabeth I, 2,500 years later. Some archeologists believe that almost as much land was being farmed in the Iron Age as in 1914.

So it comes as no surprise to see one spectacular difference from the little world of Skara Brae. Great windowless towers. They were built in the centuries before the Roman invasions, when population pressure was out most intense and farmers had growing need of protection, first from the elements, but later from each other. Many of these towers still survive but none are as daunting as the great stockade on Arran, off Ireland's west coast. They didn't just spring up around the edges of the British islands. All over the mainland too, the great hill forts of the Iron Age remain visible in terraced contours such as at Danebury and Maiden Castle. Lofty seats of power for the ribal chiefs, they were defended by rings of earthworks, timber palisades and ramparts. Behind those daunting walls this was not a world in panicky retreat.

Segment 3

00:14:42,415→

The Iron Age Britain into which the Romans eventually crashed with such alarming force was a dynamic, expanding society. From their workshops came the spectacular metalwork with which the elite decorated their bodies. Armlets, pins, brooches and ornamental shields like this, the so-called Battersea Shield. Or the astonishing stylized bronze horses, endearingly melancholy in expression, like so many Eeyores resigned to a bad day in battle.

With tribal manufacture came trade. The warriors, druid priests and artists of Iron Age Britain shipped their wares all over Europe, trading with the expanding Roman Empire. In return, with no home-grown grapes or olive, Mediterranean wine and oil arrived in large earthenware jars. So Iron Age Britain was definitely not the back of beyond. Its tribes may have led lives separated from each other by custom and language, and they may have had no great capital city but taken together they added up to something in the world – the bustling of countless productive, energetic beehives. What the bees made was not honey, but gold.

So the Romans would have known all about this strange but alluring world of fat cattle and busy forges. Evidence of its refinement would have found its way to Rome. Along with the glittering metal ware came stories of alarming cults, which may have prompted the usual Roman dinner time discussions. "All are very interesting, I dare say, but would we really want to call them a civilization?" Supposing they would have seen an ancient sculpture, like this

haunting stone face with its archaic secretive smile, the eyes closed as if in sun, mysterious devotional trance. The nose flattened, the cheeks broad, the whole thing so spellbindingly reminiscent of things the Romans must have seen in Etruria or the Greek islands. Would they then have said, "Yes, this is a work of art"? Would probably not. Sooner or later they would have noticed that the top of the head is sliced off, scooped out, like a boiled egg for breakfast, to hold sacrificial offerings. Then they would have remembered stories that the Romans told about the grisly brutality of the druids. Perhaps they would have even taken note of the stories told by the northern savages themselves, of decapitated heads who were said to speak mournfully to those who had parted them from the rest of their body, warning of vengeance to come. Then they would have thought, "Well, perhaps not. Perhaps we don't want to have much to do with an island of talking heads."

EPISODE II

Segment 1

00:18:33,855→

So why did the Romans come here, to the edge of the world, and run the gauntlet of all these ominous totems? Well, there was the lure of treasure, of course, all the pearls that Tacitus believed lay around Britain in heaps. Even more seductive was what Roman generals craved the most, the prestige given to those who pacified the barbarian frontier. And so, in the written annals of Western history, the islands now had not only a name, Britannia, but a date.

In 55 BC Julius Caesar launched his galleys across the Channel. Julius Caesar must have supposed that all he had to do was to land his legions in force and the Britons, just cowed by the spectacle of the glittering helmets, and eagle standards, would simply queue up to surrender. They'd understand that history always fought on the side of Rome. The trouble was, geography didn't. Not once but twice Julius Caesar's plans were sabotaged by that perennial secret weapon of the British, the weather. On the first go round in 55 BC, a cavalry transport which had already missed the high tide and got itself four days late, finally got going only to run directly into a storm and be blown right back to Gaul.

A century later, Claudius, the club-foot stammerer, on the face of it, the most unlikely conqueror of all, was determined to get it right. If it was going to be done at all, Claudius

reckoned, it had to be done in such massive force that there was no chance of repeating the embarrassment of Julius. So Claudius's invasion force was immense, some 40,000 troops. The kind of army that could barely be conceived of, much less encountered in Iron Age Britain. Claudius did succeed where Julius Caesar had failed, through a brilliant strategy of carrot and stick. He would seize the largely undefended oppida or town and strike at the heart of British aristocracy, its places of status, prestige and worship. But for this chieftains sensible enough to reach for the olive branch rather than the battle javelin, Claudius had another plan. Given them, or rather their sons, a trip to Rome, a taste of the dolce vita, and watch their resistance melt. While in Rome, many of them must have begun to notice that life for your average patrician was well exceptionally sweet. So before long they naturally began to hunger for a taste of it themselves. If there were sumptuous country villas amidst the olive groves of the Roman countryside, why could there not be equally sumptuous country villas amidst the pear orchards of the South Downs? Just fall in line, be a little reasonable, some judicious supports here and there and see what you would result with – the spectacular palace at Fishbourne.

The man who built it was Togidubnus, king of Regnenses in what would be Sussex, and one of the quickest to sign up as Rome's legal ally. He was rewarded with enough wealth to build himself something fit for a Roman. Only the extraordinary mosaic floors survived, but the place was as big as 4 football pitches, grand enough for someone who now gloried in the name of Tiberius Claudius Cogidumnus. He couldn't have been the only British chief to realize on which side his bread was buttered. All over Britain were rulers who thought a Romanian connection would do more good than harm in their pursuit of power and status.

Segment 2

00:23:00,015→

The person we usually think of as embodying British national resistance to Rome, Queen Boudicca of the East Anglia tribe of the Iceni, actually came from a family of happy, even eager collaborators. It took only a policy of incredible stupidity, arrogance and brutality on the part of the local Roman governor to turn her from a warm supporter of Rome to its most dangerous enemy. In a show of brutal arrogance, the local governor had declared East Anglia a slave province. To make the point about who exactly owned whom, Boudicca was treated to a public flogging while her two daughters were raped in front of her. In 60 AD, Boudicca rose up in

furious revolt, quickly gathering an army bent on vengeance. With the cream of the Roman troops tied down suppressing an insurgency in north Wales, Boudicca's army marched towards the place which most symbolized the now-hated Roman colonization of Britain, Colchester. It helped that it was lightly garrisoned. After a firestorm march through eastern England, burning Roman settlements one by one, it was the city's turn. The frightened Roman colonists had to fall back to the one place they were sure they were going to be protected by their emperor and their gods – the great temple of Claudius. If the terrified Romans thought they were going to escape the implacable anger of Boudicca, they were seriously out of luck. With thousands of them huddled terrified in the temple of these foundations, she began to set light to it. They must have been able to smell the scorch and smoke and the fire coming towards them, as the whole of their sparkling imperial city burned down with themselves and everything else buried in smoke and ash. Thousands died in this place. Boudicca had her revenge.

But her triumph couldn't last. The lightly-defended civilians of Colchester were one thing but now she would have to face the disciplined Roman army, fully prepared for all she could throw at them. Sure enough, when the two forces met, Boudicca's swollen and unwieldy army was no match for the legions. Her great insurrection ended in a glory chaotic slaughter. So Boudicca took her own life rather than fall into the hands of the Romans.

Lessons had to be learned in a hard way, at least for some. When the barbarians started attacking Roman forts in the north, the Romans knew exactly what to do. On 79AD, an enormous pitched battle took place on the slopes of an identified Highland mountain, which Tacitus called Graupius. The result was another slaughter, but not before the Caledonian general, Calgacus, delivered the first anti-imperial speech on Scotland's soil. *"Here at the world's end, on the last inch of liberty, we have lived unmolested to this day defended by our remoteness and obscurity. But there no other tribes to come, nothing but sea and cliffs and these more deadly Romans whose arrogance you cannot escape by obedience and self-restraint, to plunder, butcher, steal. These things they misname empire, they make a desolation and they call it peace."* Of course, Calgacus never said any such things. This was a speech written long after the event by Tacitus and it's entirely Roman, not Scottish. Yet this burning sentiment would echo down the generations. Like Britannia itself, the idea of free Caledonia was from the first, a Roman invention.

Segment 3

00:28:28,135→

There was one emperor, Spanish by birth, who understood that even the world's biggest empire needed to know its limits. And he of course was destined, in Britain at any rate, to be remembered by a wall. When we think of Hadrian's Wall, we tend to think of the Romans rather like US cavalrymen deep in Indian country, defending the flag, peering through the cracks and waiting nervously for war drums and smoke signals, a place where paranoia sweated from every stone. But it wasn't really like that at all. As fantastically and ambitious as this was, stretching 73 miles from coast to coast from the Solway to the Tyne, and though Hadrian probably conceived it in response to a rebellion on the part of those people the Romans loftily referred to as *Brittunculi* – wretched little Brits – almost certainly, he didn't mean it as an impermeable barrier against barbarian onslaught from the north. The wall was studded with mile castles and turrets and forts like this one at Housestead.

But as Britain settles down in the second century AD, these places became up-country hill stations more like social centres and business centres than really grim, heavily-manned barracks. So the purpose of these forts became not to prevent people going to and fro, so much as to control and observe them. The forts in particular, became a place where a kind of customs scam was imposed on those trying to do business on one side or the other. It may be better to think of the wall not so much as a fence but rather as a spine around which control of northern Britain toughened, hardened and prospered.

If we can imagine Hadrian's Wall as not such a bad posting, it's because our sense of what life was like at that time, has been transformed by one of the most astonishing finds of recent archaeology – the so-called Vindolanda Tablets. They are scraps of Roman correspondence, jotting, scribbles and drafts of letters thrown away as rubbish by their authors almost 2,000 years ago. For 25 years, archaeologists here have been digging up these letters, some 1,300 of them, from seven metres below the ground. Up they've come, lovingly separated from dirt, debris and each other and painstakingly deciphered. At once poignantly fragile and miraculously enduring, the voices of the Roman frontier in the windy North Country, loud, clear and strong.

From Masculus to Tribune Serianus: *“Greetings, please instruct as to what you want us to do tomorrow. Are we all to return with the standard or only half of us? My troops have no beer. Please order some to be sent.” “I sent you two pairs of socks and sandals, and two pairs of underpants. Greet Elpus Tetricus and your messmates, with whom I pray you’re getting on well.” “He beat me and threatened to pour my goods down the drain. I implore your mercifulness not to allow me an innocent man from overseas to be beaten by rods as if a criminal. I warmly invite you to my birthday party on the third day before the Ides of September. Please come, as it will be so much more enjoyable for me if you were here.”*

A world of garrisons and barracks had now become a society in its own right. From the middle of the second century, it makes sense to talk about Roman-British culture, and not just as a colonial veneer imposed on the resentful natives, but as a genuine fusion. Nowhere was this clearer than here in Bath. Bath was quintessential Romano-British place. At once mod con and mysterious cult, therapy and luxury, a marvel of hydrolic engineering and a showy theatre of the waters of healing. The spar was an extravaganza of buildings constructed over a spring that gushed a third of a million gallons of pumping hot water into the baths every day. When you soaked in a bath, you washed your body and your soul, ablution and devotion at the same time. Much of the bathing, as well as the flirting, the gossip and the deal making went on in this austere grandiose Great Bath. But the spiritual heart of the place was the scared spring – a ferny grotto where water collected and where the devotees of the presiding goddess, Sulis Minerva, could look through a specially constructed window at the alter erected in her honour and occasionally could throw gift offerings in her way.

Bath was not the only place where Romano-Britains could wallow in the well-being of the province. In Dover, the Romans built this 96-bedroom hotel, now 20 feet below street level but the last word in luxury for any VIP disembarking from Gaul.

Segment 4

00:35:13,175→

By the fourth century, however, Rome was in deep trouble, attacked by barbarians and undermined by endless political turmoils. Britannia couldn’t remain detached from the fate of the rest of the empire forever. At some point, Dover’s significance for Britannia changed from a port of entry to a defensive stronghold, and the “Welcome” mat gave way to the “Keep Out”

sign, in the shape of massive walls built snack through the Grand Hotel's lobby. This is the sort of wall the Romans built at Dover.

This is Portchester, a Roman port fort, a truly colossal structure that makes all too clear the scale of threat the Romans felt the barbarians posed. Inside it lies a Norman castle built 1,000 years later and now completely dwarfed by it. It was one of several such forts strung out along the southern and eastern coasts. But not even fortifications like those of Portchester or Hadrian's Wall in the north could work without adequate troops. As more and more legionaries were sent back to fight on the continent, and as Picts and Saxons, spotting the weakness, started their own raids from the north to the east, Britannia couldn't help but feel the chill of vulnerability. And when in the year 410, Alaric the Goth sacked Rome and the last two legions departed to prop up the tottering empire, that chill developed into an acute anxiety attack.

This was one of the genuinely fateful moments in British history, the legions departed. Now it wasn't like Hong Kong in 1997, no flags flying or pipers piping, the Governor was not driving around his courtyard seven times pledging to return. Now, doubtless, the Romano-British did hope and expect to see the eagles back some day. The tax collectors, and magistrates, and town councilors, poets, potters, musicians and the newly-Christian priests, all said to themselves, "Well, this couldn't go on forever. We couldn't always look to Mother Rome, and Mother Rome is half-infested with barbarians. Anyway, we can handle it. We've got the Saxons' shore forts. We can hire barbarians to deal with other barbarians. We can handle this. We CAN handle this."

EPISODE III

Segment 1

00:38:10,415→

For the less confident, of course, there was only one thing to do: Bury their treasure and head for the hills...planning, as refugees always do, to return when the worst was over and dig it all up again. In the case of this particular hoard of 15,000 coins, gems, medals, and this exquisite silver tigress, they never did. It was instead discovered in 1992 at Hoxne in Suffolk and is now kept in the British Museum.

Some sort of force was badly needed to stop the barbarians in the north and west from exploiting the vacuum of power left by the exit of the legions. At first, the warriors from north Germany and Denmark, sailing up-river in their wave forces, seemed a boon, not a curse. Well, when one local despot, Vortiger, naively imagined he could use the imported barbarians as his own personal military muscle but neglected to pay them as per the contract, he made one of the more spectacular blunders in British history. Furious at being stiffed, the Saxons turned on the local population they'd been hired to defend. When they finished burning and pillaging, they took land in lieu of pay, settling down amidst the understandably dismayed native population. Dismayed, but not, I think, terrified. Though the earliest chroniclers of the coming of the Saxons thought of Vortigern's faux pas as heralding a sort of final apocalypse, no one had turned the lights out on Roman Britannia and declared the Dark Ages to have begun.

The long process by which Roman Britannia morphed into the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms was gradual not sudden, an adaptation, not an annihilation. For a long time the Saxons were a tiny minority, numbered in hundreds rather than thousands, and they lived in an overwhelmingly Romano-British population. As different as these cultures were, they were still neighbors. The vast majority still tried and succeeded in living some sort of Roman life.

Here at Wroxeter, in Shropshire, the Roman Veraconium, there's wonderful evidence of this made-do, hybride, improvised world poised between Roman ruins and Anglo-Saxon beginnings. When the bath house stopped functioning, the citizens here just took the tiles and used them for paving. When the roof of the great basilica threatened to fall in, the citizens simply went and demolish the whole building themselves. Inside the shell they put up a new timber structure spacious and elegant enough to give them the sense they were still living some sort of Roman lifestyle, although in an increasingly phantom Britannia. Eventually the adaptations became ever more makeshift, the fabric of Roman life increasingly threadbare, until it did fall apart altogether.

The island was now divided into three utterly different realms. The remains of Britannia hung on in the west. North of the abandoned walls and forts, the Scottish tribes for the most part, stayed pagan. And England, the realm of the Anglo-Saxons and Jutes, was planted in the east, all away from Kent to the kingdom of Bernicia in Northumbria.

The Saxons chiefs often built their settlements on the ruined remains of old Roman-British towns, not at least of course London. Like many invaders, they hankered after what they had destroyed. The showier pieces of their armour often bear startling resemblances of

Roman armour and their leaders aspired to be something more than was chiefs. They wanted to be known as “dux”, a Roman duke. But in one crucial respect, the Germanic tribal societies were utterly different from the Romans. Theirs was a culture based on the blood feud and punishment by ordeal. An entire social system, its plunder was the glue of loyalty. But the Saxons were no more immune to change than the Romans had been before them.

To look at the relics recovered from Sutton Hoo burial site is to be teased by a powerful question: Did the Saxon lord buried here find his resting place in a pagan Valhalla or in a Christian paradise? The history of the conversions between the 6th and 8th centuries is another turning point in the history of the British Isles.

Segment 2

00:43:→56,615

But while the legions had long gone, the shadows of Rome fell once again on these islands. This time though, it was an invasion of the soul and the warriors were carrying Christian gospels rather than swords. The process began in a country that had never been touched by Roman rule in the first place – the land the Romans called Hibernia – Ireland.

We have to remember that the most famous of the early missionaries of Ireland, St Patrick, was in fact Romano-British aristocrat, the patrician – or Patricius – as he called himself. So there was nothing remotely Irish about the teenager who was kidnapped and sold into slavery by Irish raiders, sometime in the early fifth century. It was only after he escaped, probably to Brittany, and ordained, then visited by prophetic dreams, that he returned to Ireland, this time the messenger of the gospel. Patrick understood that the monastic ideal of retreat was perfectly matched with the needs of local royal clans. So monasteries like Arran, off the gull-swept Irish coast, with their beehive cells and encircling stone walls, looked like a stronghold, an encampment for God.

So what about the dragon slayers on the mainland? Who converted them? One man gives us the answer. To all schoolchildren of my generation, growing up in the 1950s, he will be the Venerable Bede.

Bede was not just the founding father of English history. Arguably he was said the first consummate storyteller in all English literature. He was not exactly well travelled. He spent

virtually his entire life here in Jarrow. But in a few luminous lines he could conjure up not just the world of holy men and hermits but the world of the great timbered halls of Saxon kings, with their firelight and roasting meat, or the death ----- of a great war-horse. It was this masterful grip on narrative that made Bede not just an authentic historian but also a brilliant propagandist for the early church. Bede sees without any starry-eyed sentimentality what could overcome the deep mistrust of the pagan kings when asked to abandon their traditional gods. According to the most touching speeches in Bede's entire history, the clinching moment of persuasion for one noble was nothing more than a gambler's bet. "It seems to me, my Lord, that the present life here on earth is as though a sparrow in winter time should come to a house and very swiftly fly through it, entering at one window, and straight away passing through another, while you sit at dinner with your captains in a hall made warm with a great fire, while outside there are the raging tempests of winter rain and snow. For that short time it be within the house, the bird feels no smart of the winter storm, but soon passes again from winter back to winter and escapes your sight. So the life of a man here appears for a little season, but what follows or what has gone before, that surely we do not know. We are foreigners if this new learning has brought us any certainty, makes think it is worthy to be followed."

It's typical, Bede put these words in the mouth of a nobleman, for the church in Anglo-Saxon England was just a branch of the aristocracy. St Wilfred, the aristocratic Bishop of York, deliberately used a part of Hadrian's Wall to build at Hexham a basilica worthy of Roman authority. For Bede and St Wilfred, it was crucial that it was the Roman, not the Irish Celtic church, that won over Britain. What they passionately desired was the reconnection of a converted country with its Roman mother, a true homecoming.

The authority of the Roman Saxon church though didn't guarantee protection. Bede had had forebodings before he died in 735. Sure enough, half a century later, in 793, an Anglo-Saxon chronicle reports..."Dire portents appeared over Northumbria. Immense whirlwinds and flashes of lightning and fiery dragons were seen flying through the air. A great famine followed. A little after that, on the 8th June, the ravages of heathen men miserably destroyed God's church at Lindisfarne." The heathen men were of course, the Vikings.

Segment 3

00:49:39,495→

If you look long enough and hard enough at almost any culture you'll find something good to say about it. The historians of the Vikings understandably distressed at the rape and pillage stereotype, have asked us lately to think of things other than sail, land, burn and plunder to say about the Vikings. They've said, "Look at their metalwork, look at their ships, look at their great poetic sagas." So now we know the Vikings did come bearing something other than a nasty attitude. They came carrying amber and fur, and walrus ivory. But somehow, though, this vision of the Vikings as rapid-transit, long-distance commercial travellers, singing their sagas as they sailed to a new market opening, I think it wouldn't have cut much ice with the priests here at the cathedral of Bradwell-on-Sea, just a crab scuttle away from the area where I grew up as a child, on the Essex shore.

There'd been a church here at Bradwell-on-Sea for over 200 years. It was originally built on the remains of an old Roman fort, and I can't help thinking how the priests would have found those stone defences reassuring as they waited nervously for the Viking raids that they knew could strike hard and fierce at any moment.

At addition to land, the Vikings were keen on another kind of merchandise ...- people – whom they sold as slaves. Thousands of slaves were taken from Armagh in one raid alone. A burial dated 879 contained a Viking warrior with his sword, two ritually murdered slave girls, and the bones of hundreds of men, women and children, his very own body count, to take with him to Valhalla. On the positive side, there was one thing that the Vikings did manage to do, however, inadvertently – they created England.

By smashing the power of most of the Saxon kingdoms, the Vikings accomplished what, left to themselves, the warring tribes could never have managed – some semblance of alliance against a common foe. To push back the Viking onslaught, to repair some of the terrible damage they'd done, we'd need more than just a competent tribal warrior chief. It would need someone with a vision, not just of victory, but of government; someone who could harness Anglo-Saxon energy and determination to Roman military discipline. It's got to need, in fact, a local Charlemagne, someone with the intelligence and imagination of a truly Roman ruler. And he, of course, was Alfred.

Segment 4

00:52:48,295→

Our cherished image of Alfred is of the hero on the run, up against steep odds, muddling through, taking it on the chin when scolded for burning the cakes. But the story which really tells you all you need to know about Alfred isn't set in the swamps of Somerset but on the Palatine Hill of Rome and is much more startling and illuminating – and it happens to be true.

As a small boy, Alfred's father, king Aethelwulf, sent him on a special mission to Rome to see Pope Leo IV, probably to ask the Pope's help in the struggle against the Vikings. In a ceremony, the Pope dressed the little fellow in the imperial purple of a Roman consul and wound a sword belt around his waist, turning little Alfred into a true Roman Christian warrior. On a second trip, Alfred spent a whole year in the Eastern City, along with his father, walking the ruins of the empire and the sacred sites. It was sure this experience which made him what he was – a philosopher prince, and someone who, in more than a literal sense, translated the works of Roman wisdom for Anglo-Saxon consumption. Through Alfred, England got something it hadn't had since the legions departed: an authentic vision of a realm governed by law and education, a realm which, since Alfred commissioned a translation of Bede into Anglo-Saxon, understood its part and its special destiny as the western bastion of a Christian Roman world.

First he had to win these battles. He took the throne of Wessex at a time when, despite a recent victory, the collapse of his kingdom seemed imminent, and with it the entirety of Anglo-Saxon England. It was here amidst the reed of Athelney Island that the heroic legend of Alfred, the fugitive on the run, finally turning the tide against his enemies, was born.

By the spring of 878, Alfred had managed to piece together an improvised alliance of resistance. At King Egbert's stone on the borders of Wiltshire and Somerset, near the site of this 19th-century holly built to celebrate it, he took command of an army which two days later, fought and defeated Guthrum's Vikings. Alfred's victory was a holding operation, forcing the Vikings to settle for less than half the country. But when in 886 Alfred entered London, rebuilt over the old Roman site, something of a deep significance did happen. He was acclaimed as the sovereign lord of all the English people not under subjection to the Danes.

So it appears that during Alfred's lifetime the idea of a united English kingdom had become conceivable and even desirable. The exquisite Alfred Jewel found not far from Athelney has inscribed on its edge: "Aelfred mec heht gewyrca" – "Alfred caused me to be made." And at the same might well be said of his reinvention of the English monarchy. The enormous haunting eyes which dominate the figure are said to be symbols of wisdom or sight, apt qualities for a ruler whose ambitions were so lofty. Alfred's special gift was indeed to be able to see clearly England's place in the scheme of things, the depth of his realm to antiquity, his bequest to posterity.

With his realm transformed, Alfred made possible a true Anglo-Saxon renaissance in the 10th century, creating stunning works of Christian art and architecture. But the long shadow of Rome still fell over all this brilliance. Alfred's grandson would be crowned the first King of England in a great Roman-style coronation. And where did this momentous event happen? Where else but Bath.

Well, we shouldn't get ahead of ourselves. England has been conceived, not yet born, and to north, Pictland has even further to go before its recognisably a kingdom of Scotland. For a generation or two it did look as though the grafting of Anglo-Saxon culture onto the enduring legacy of Roman Britain had produced an extraordinary flowering. But the shoots were still green, the buds were tender and vulnerable, and before this new kingdom had a chance to mature, it would be cut down by the devastating blow of an invader's axe.