

Trade Links in the Pre-Roman and Roman Era

Before the Romans invaded, Britain had a reputation for producing fine quality products. The woollen clothes exported (sold to another country) were considered to be the best available. Animals and baskets were also exported before the Romans conquered Britain. In return, Britain imported (goods bought into the country) fruit and vegetables from Gaul. Trade was limited by travel because people could only walk on foot or ride a horse. Each tribe that lived in Britain also had their own currency, which meant that people could only trade goods for goods.



When the Romans came to Britain, they introduced their own currency, which was already being used across Europe. The Roman army also created peace by introducing laws. Historians call this peace 'Pax Romana'. This meant that it was safe for people to travel long distances without having their goods stolen. The army also built roads, which meant that goods could be moved a lot quicker than they had on the old mud tracks that people used in the past.



The Romans increased the mining of lead, as this was used for plumbing and was a source of silver. As well as lead, Britain also exported woollen products and tin. The leaders of the Empire wanted to keep their citizens happy, so they imported



luxury items such as silk, jewellery, wine, olive oil, pottery and papyrus. The new roads also meant that it was possible to trade perishable foods such as figs and oysters.



There was also a lot of trade between the Roman army and the local citizens. The soldiers needed food, clothes, pottery and weapons. People travelled to the forts that the soldiers had built to sell them the goods that they needed, in exchange for gold, silver and copper coins that the soldiers earned.



Questions:

1. What does 'export' mean?

2. What does 'import' mean?

3. What did Britain have a reputation for before the Roman invasion?

4. What things did Britain export in the pre-Roman era?

5. Why was trade difficult in the pre-Roman era?

6. What does 'Pax Romana' mean and how did it help to make trading easier in the Roman Empire?

7. How did the new roads effect trading in Britain?

8. What did the leaders of the Empire do to keep the citizens happy?

9. What did the local people sell to the Roman soldiers?

10. How could the soldiers afford the goods?
