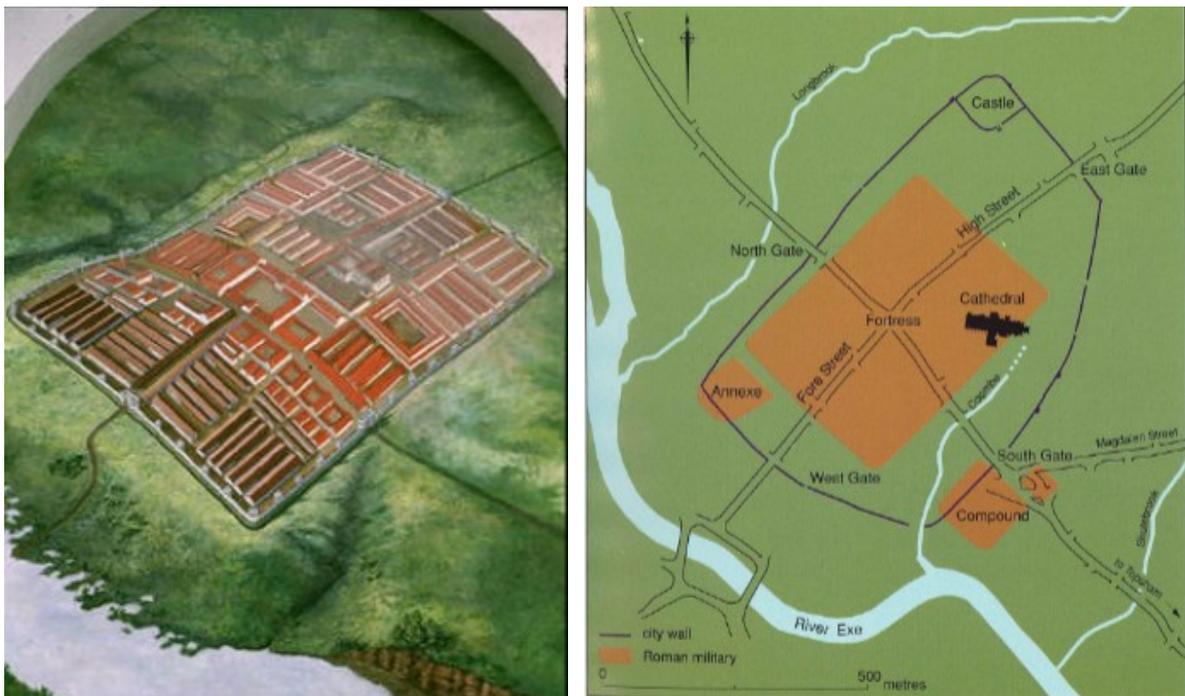


Exeter Roman Fortress

We know, from lots of different pieces of evidence, that the Romans built a large fortress in Exeter. It was a base for the soldiers to spend winter, patrol new territory and protect them from enemies. It is an important fortress because it is one of only four in the country. The Second Legion Augusta were the soldiers in Exeter.

They chose to build the fortress on high ground, a flat area about the river *Isca*. This point was narrow enough to cross the river, and people could get to it from the sea and the river. *Isca* means 'water' or 'river' in the Celtic language, and the name Exeter comes from this. It had great views to spot the enemy and lots of land to grow food for all those hungry soldiers. The Romans called it *Isca Dumnoniorum*.

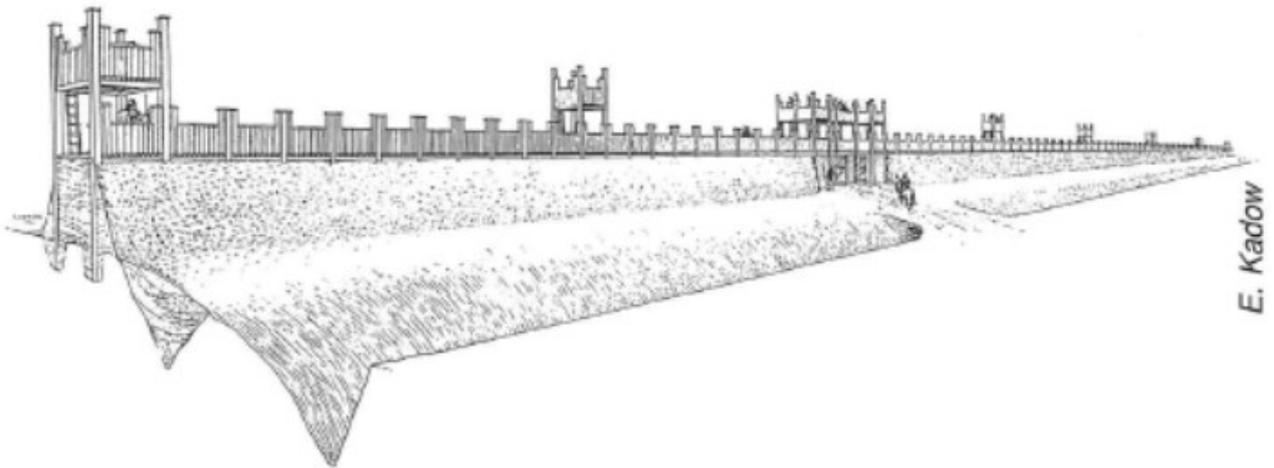


An artist's impression of the Roman Fortress, and the outline of the Fortress on a modern day map

It is often mistakenly thought that the Roman Fortress was made of stone, and that the remains of Roman walls that exist in Exeter today were part of it. In fact the fortress was made of wood, covering 42 acres (1,070 square metres) and took up only the middle area of what would become the walled town after the Roman soldiers left.

The Fortress would have had ramparts made from clay with a wooden fence and walkway running along it.

There were four gates, one on each side of the Fortress. Towers on the ramparts every 100 Roman Feet and two ditches around the outside. One of these ditches was called a Punic and was so huge you would never be able to escape.



Drawing showing one of the four gates, and the Punic ditch
Source: An Introduction to the Roman Legionary Fortress at Exeter (2015)

Inside the Fortress there were barracks for the soldiers to sleep in, a hospital and workshops for making and mending equipment.

There were houses for the Commander and his deputies called Military Tribunes and a very impressive bathhouse kept everyone clean. Granaries kept their food safe and dry, and finally there was Commander Headquarters for holding meetings, and of course to look after all the money and other important items.

Make a Roman Fortress in your home or garden

- Have a look around your house and gather some materials to make a fort. You could use cushions, blankets, boxes, cardboard or anything else you can find
- Choose a spot to build your fort. Will it be a good place to see the enemy arrive?
- Think about the outside perimeter, what can you use to make it really strong to keep the enemy out? Don't forget a gateway to get in!

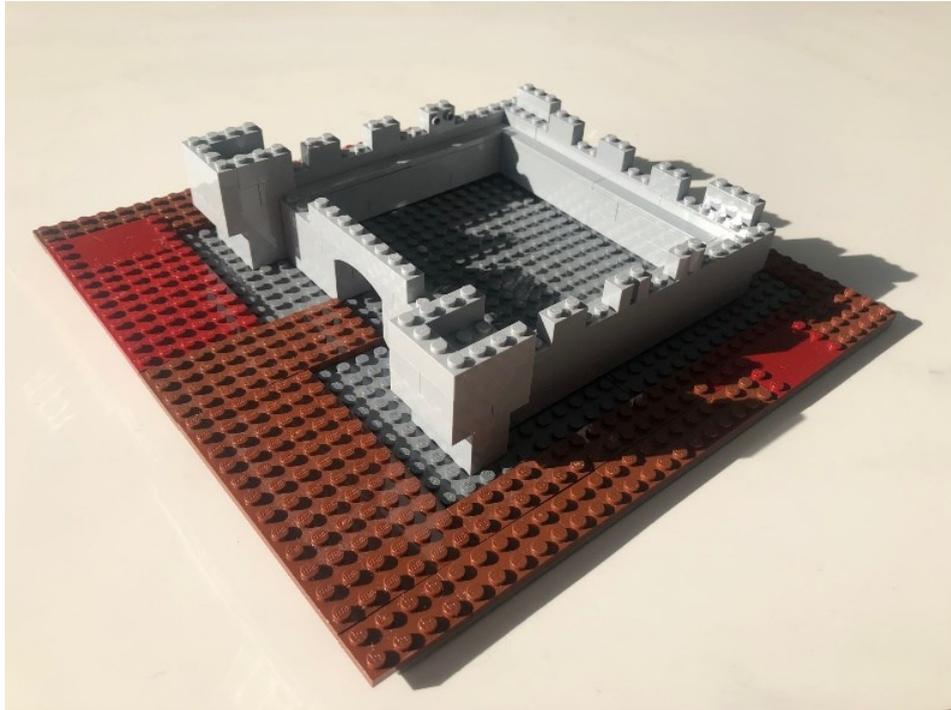
- ▶ Now think about what you will have inside your fortress
- ▶ Is there a place for sleeping, keeping food and keeping people well? Where will you keep your treasure?



What your homemade fortress may look like made out of living room cushions and table, by S Creek

Create a Roman Fortress model

- ▶ With all your knowledge of a Roman Fortress, have a go at making your own model
- ▶ You could try some junk modelling, use LEGO or even try it on your computer
- ▶ Think about all the things you need to make a fortress that will keep the enemy at bay, but don't forget that the Roman's liked a few home comforts like the a bathhouse
- ▶ To give you some more ideas, why not explore the [Exeter Roman Fortress in Minecraft](#)
- ▶ See Exeter as the Romans first built it.



A fortress made from LEGO bricks, including ramparts, towers and a gate, by S Creek

Create a Roman Soldier survival kit

Roman soldiers living in the fortress would have all had their own survival kit. It included a basket, a metal bottle for water, coins, some game dice, a few personal items and food for three days (biscuits, bacon, cheese and sour wine). They even carried their own saucepan for cooking. The picture below shows a saucepan found in a pit in Friernhay.



A Roman saucepan, and a survival kit as we would imagine it today

Other items they would have had in their kit would have been a chain, saw, pickaxe and sickle. It must have been very heavy to carry around!

- ▶ Imagine you are going on an expedition and create your own survival kit
- ▶ Think about where you are going. What will be really important to take with you, and what would be nice to have? Will you need food and water? Will you need rope, or maybe something to sit on?
- ▶ Make a **Survival Kit** of thing you would pack
- ▶ Draw the items in a picture of a bag, or you could actually pack your items in a real bag
- ▶ Remember to think about how heavy the items will be. You must be able to carry your bag!

Create your own Fortress roof tile stamp

The picture below shows a roof tile like ones that might have been found at the Exeter Fortress. We know the soldiers here were the Second Legion Augusta, and they stamped their name in the tiles. If you look carefully, you can see the letters are: L.E.G.II.A.V.G.



L.E.G.II.A.V.G.

Tile from the Roman port of Abonae at Sea Mills, on display at M Shed Bristol. It bears the stamp of the Second Augusta Legion who were stationed a short boat ride across the Severn estuary at Caerleon.

Have a go at making your own roof tile stamp:

- ▶ Using some thick card, cut shapes out to make a design. You could print the initials of your name
- ▶ Arrange and stick these to a cardboard base and leave to dry
- ▶ Put some paint in a shallow container (a plate works well) and dip your stamp in
- ▶ We painted the paper first, to create a red (tile coloured) background



Example card stamp and the paint image it produces, by S Creek

Think about the image to want to print. Simple designs work really well. Look carefully at the picture of the stamp above, what do you notice is different between the card stamp and the paint image it produces?

Make your own Roman Board Game

We know that Roman soldiers would have enjoyed playing different games in the fortress. They even carried game dice in their soldier's kit. This is a Roman Gaming counter. It is made from animal bone and was found in Exeter.



A Roman gaming counter from RAMM's collection, and a Roman style board game by S Creek

A popular Roman game was called [TAVULA](#) (Tabula) and it would have been a bit like backgammon.

Have a go at making your own game:

- You could keep it simple and use chalk on the ground to create a kind of board, and then use small stones as counters, you could even paint them in you wanted
- You could make your game more complicated and draw a board
- Think about what you will call your game and how many players there will be
- Will you use dice? How will you win?
- You might find it helpful to think of a game you know well, like snakes and ladders or draughts and change a few bits to create a new game.

Have fun and be creative!

Don't forget to take a photograph of your finished pieces to show your teacher.