

31 A TRIP TO THE BATHS

In the Latin Club we've been looking at how the Romans lived 2000 years ago. Something the Romans did EVERY day was go to the baths – they didn't just nip to the bathroom for this, they went to the public baths. Members of the Latin Club would now like to show you a typical trip to the baths:

Narrator We begin by seeing a certain Roman Lady arriving at the baths, known as the **Thermae ...**

[Signholder : Holds up THERMAE board]

Narrator ... and going to pay to go in. Their slave goes with her– you'll see why later.

[Cashier sits by table, while lady & slave approach]

Lady : salve! [Hello]

Cashier: salve!

Narrator The cost of going to the baths was tiny – one quadrans, the smallest Roman coin there was – it was like paying one pence to get in! Children were free.

Cashier: unus quadrans, si vis [One quadrans, please]

Lady : *(Holding out a large gold coin)* hic? [This one?]

Narrator She's not got an attack of hiccups! "Hic" means "This one".

Cashier: *(Shaking her head)* minime. [No]

Lady : *(Holding a large silver coin)* hic? [This one?]

Cashier: *(Shaking her head)* minime. [No]

Lady : *(Holding a tiny bronze coin)* hic? [This one?]

Cashier: ita vero! [Yes]

(She pays the Cashier the coin)

Cashier: gratias! intrate! [Thank you. Go in]

(They enter.)

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Scene III

Narrator ... known as the **Apodyterium**.

[Signholder : Holds up Apodyterium board]

Narrator And there, you take your clothes off.

Lady: (*Takes jumper off*).

Narrator All your clothes.

Lady: minime vero! [Absolutely not!]

Narrator It seems our lady doesn't want to undress here! What shall we do, (lady's name)?

Lady: animo concipeant! [Use your imagination!]

Narrator She says you'll just have to imagine that bit – perhaps that's wise!

Once undressed, you put your clothes in a little space in the wall. And you hope they're still there when you come back – there are no lockers in these baths!

You put wooden clogs on your feet, for the floor is very hot.

Lady: (*Hops about and then puts on wooden/cardboard sandals*).

Narrator The Romans had underfloor heating, but there was no gas or electricity to heat it – it was made by lighting a fire at the entrance to hollow chambers under the floor, which were known as the **hypocausts**.

[Signholder: holds up Hypocaust board]

Narrator The fire would heat the air under the floor , so that the floor got hot.

Small slave children were ordered to crawl into those smoky, hot tunnels – here comes one now (*enter boy, crawling across stage, wiping brow*) and clean out the ash and soot so they didn't get clogged up. A really nasty job.

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Scene IV

Narrator So, by now you're hot and sweaty from your exercise, and completely naked. You go into the warm room, known as the **Tepidarium**.

[Signholder: Holds up **Tepidarium** board.]

Narrator where you rest on benches while you get used to the warmth.

Lady & new lady : *(Rest on tables)*

Narrator Here you chat to your friends and exchange gossip

Lady: salve ! [Hello]

New lady: salve! [Hello]

(both whisper and giggle, look shocked etc ... They turn to the narrator and giggle and point)

Narrator Yes, *thank you*, Ladies. (Both exit)

Scene V

Narrator Then it's on to the hot room, or **Caldarium**.

[Signholder: Holds up **caldarium** board]

Narrator It's rather like a sauna or steam room. You lie on benches again

Lady: *(lies on table)*

Narrator This is where you'd get clean.

Your slave, who you brought with you, *(enter slave)* rubs oil from a flask into your skin. *(Slave rubs oil onto Roman)*

Narrator This oil mixes with sweat and dirt on your skin, lovely eh? The slave then uses a strigil *(Slave holds up strigil to show to the audience)*

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Narrator and scrapes off all that oil – and the sweat and dirt –from your skin using a strigil
(slave scrapes muck off, holding nose!) – Lovely!

Narrator The Romans were a funny lot – gladiators, like everyone else, were cleaned this way too, but successful gladiators were the pop stars of their day and all that oil and muck and sweat that was scraped off them was collected and sold to their adoring public! Yuk!

Narrator Anyway, back to the baths. If you were too poor to own a slave, it was difficult to scrape the muck off your back

Soldier : *Tries to scrape back, twisting round and round!*

Narrator so you'd rub yourself on the marble wall instead.

Soldier : *(rubs self on wall)*

Narrator There's a real story about this: One day, an old, poor, soldier was rubbing himself on the wall in this way ...

Soldier : *(Rubs self on wall)*

Narrator when the Emperor Hadrian came to the public baths (as he had a habit of doing).
(Enter emperor) He saw this old soldier, who he knew and asked him what he was doing:

Emperor Hadrian : quid facis? [What are you doing?]

Narrator The wretched soldier told him he was poor and had no slaves:

Soldier : pauper sum. non servi habeo.

Narrator Horrified, the emperor gave him slaves *and* money. *(delighted soldier lies down and is pampered!)*

(Exit emperor)

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Narrator Word of this got around. The next day, the emperor came to the baths as usual (*enter emperor*) and, not surprisingly, (*enter lots of men, all rubbing themselves on the wall*) there were lots of men, rubbing themselves on the wall, hoping for money and slaves.

Narrator The emperor thought for a moment (*emperor looks thoughtful*) and then told them to rub each other down!

Emperor Hadrian: (*pointing to each*) defricate se! defricate se! defricate se!
(*as many as there are soldiers*)

Narrator Ah well, it was worth a try, lads!

Scene VI

Narrator Back to our visit to the Baths: Once you're squeaky clean, you go into the next room, the **caldarium**

[Signholder : Holds up **Caldarium** board]

Narrator and you climb into the cold plunge bath ...

Lady: aaaahhhh! (*screaming!*) frigidus est! [It's cold!]

Narrator Yes. It's really cold!
Fresh and invigorated, you get dressed again and, if it's one of the huge baths built in a big city, you can spend your day there. For there, you can stroll along in the beautiful gardens, admiring statues and wonderful decoration ...

Lady & friend : (*Stroll around and stays on scene, wandering around*)

Narrator you can read a book from the library there
(*Enter new bather who reads a scroll and settles in a corner*)

Narrator or listen to authors reciting their new books to publicise them ...

Author : bar, bar. Bar, bar bar bar. Bar, bar bar (*continue!*)

Narrator You'll notice he says bar bar bar – not blah blah blah. This is the Roman sound for talking rubbish: the Romans thought that anyone who didn't speak Latin sounded like silly sheep – they were **barbarians!**

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Narrator Or you might eat some of the food and drink that many sellers can provide ...

Chicken Seller: pullus! Pullus! (*holding up pretend chicken*) [Chicken! Chicken!]

Bread Seller : panis! Panis! (*holding up pretend bread*) [Bread! Bread!]

Fish Seller : piscis! Piscis! (*holding up pretend fish*) [Fish! Fish!]

Sausage Seller: tomacula! (*holding up pretend sausages*) [Sausages! Sausages!]

Narrator or you might do business (*Enter anyone not on stage, shaking hands, doing business – ALL the sellers begin to call out their wares at once*) – IF YOU CAN HEAR EACH OTHER!

Narrator Or you might simply go home. But you'll be back tomorrow, for nearly all Romans go to the baths every day!

[Signholder: Holds up **FINIS** board]

THE END

All: VALETE! (*Bow*) [Goodbye!]

Props required for A TRIP TO THE BATHS

Table – for entrance desk, and later as bench

Word boards to hold up

Cardboard sandals

Strigil – use Capt.hook blade on handle, or cardboard cutout!

Large gold coin, large silver coin and tiny coin - £2, 10p and 1p will do.

Ball to play with

Pretend chicken, bread and fish, sausages – or whatever play food (Roman food!) you can find

2 Scrolls to read

The gladiator could have a sword