

ON THE DOLE

By the first century AD, there were over a million people living in Rome, and many of them were too poor to survive without special help from the government. Rations of free grain - known as the corn dole - were handed out to the poorest 200,000 citizens and their families, so they could eat. Most of the grain came from Egypt, and if the grain ships were late arriving, violent riots could break out.

FIRE! FIRE!

Most Romans lived in flimsy apartment blocks heated by metal braziers filled with burning wood. Fire was a constant danger, so Augustus organized groups of firefighters - called *vigiles* - to tackle blazes in the city. But, equipped only with buckets of water and basic hand pumps, the *vigiles* couldn't cope with the largest fires.

In AD64, Rome was devastated by the worst fire in its history. Only four of the city's fourteen districts were left undamaged, and three were completely burned to the ground. At the time, many Romans blamed the Emperor Nero for starting the fire so that he could build himself a vast palace in the ruins of the city. Nero was said to have sung and played his lyre as he watched Rome burn, but in fact he may have tried to help put out the fires.



The temple of Jupiter on the Capitol Hill

Brightly painted statues

The Tabularium - or public record office - where state records were kept

The Basilica Julia - a court house begun by Julius Caesar and completed by Augustus

The temple of the god Saturn, who was said to have taught the Romans how to farm

Temple of Concord - or Peace

Arch of Septimius Severus

The speakers' platform - or Rostra - was used for official ceremonies, such as funeral speeches.

Shrine of Venus Cloacina, goddess of the sewer

This is the Curia, where the Senate met.