

# DATES, TIME AND NUMBERS

The calendar we use today is based on the Roman calendar. On these two pages, you can find out about Roman months and weeks, and discover how the Romans calculated their dates. There is also information on how the Romans measured time and a quick guide to Roman numerals.

## THE ROMAN CALENDAR

According to Roman legend, Romulus - the founder and first king of Rome - divided the Roman year into ten months. Here is a list of Roman months with an explanation of their names:

- Martius* the month of the god Mars
- Aprilis* origin uncertain
- Maius* the month of Maia, mother of Mercury
- Junius* the month of the goddess Juno
- Quintilis* the fifth month
- Sextilis* the sixth month
- September* the seventh month
- October* the eighth month
- November* the ninth month
- December* the tenth month

With this system, each year only had 304 days, so King Numa later added two new months: *Januarius* (the month of the god Janus) and *Februarius* (the month of purification). In 153BC, the start of the New Year was moved from March to January 1. But even with the two new months, each year still had only 355 days, so the Romans had to keep adding in extra days to make the calendar work.

## THE JULIAN CALENDAR

During 46BC and 45BC, Julius Caesar reformed the calendar, ordering that each year should have 365 days, with an extra day every four years. This idea still survives today in our leap year. Julius Caesar's simplified system of calculating the days of the year has become known as the Julian calendar.

Finally, during the reign of the Emperor Augustus, the months of *Quintilis* and *Sextilis* were renamed *Julius* and *Augustus* after Julius Caesar and Augustus himself.

## ROMAN DATES

Within each month, dates were counted from special days, known as *Kalends*, *Ides* and *Nones*. These special days were as follows:

- Kalends* - the 1st day of each month
- Ides* - the 15th day of March, May, July and October, and the 13th day of all the other months
- Nones* - the 7th day of March, May, July and October, and the 5th day of all the other months

Dates were counted back from the *Kalends*, *Ides* or *Nones*.

### ROMAN DATE

### MODERN DATE

- V *Kalends Maius* = 5 days before the 1st day of May = April 25
- II *Nones October* = 2 days before the 7th day of October = October 5

Julius Caesar, shown here, was assassinated on March 15 - the *Ides* of March.

