

S7 E25 - The Histories of Pliny the Elder

Transcribed by Debby Stark, corrections by Peter Olausson. Final corrections by Helen.

GREENSLADE:

This is the BBC Light Program.

SECOMBE:

Whoop!

[MILLIGAN]

(OFF) Owwww!

GREENSLADE:

History for schools. Question 1: How do you spell C-A-T?

SECOMBE:

Cat! Well done!

GREENSLADE:

Question 2: Name two English queens called Elizabeth.

SECOMBE:

Jim.

GREENSLADE:

Question 3: What is the Goon Show's first name and give an example of.

SECOMBE:

That's a trick question, Wallace! So here is a trick answer entitled, The Histories of Pliny the Elder!

[MILLIGAN]

(OFF) Oo-hoo-hey-hoo!

ORCHESTRA:

IMPERIAL ROMAN MUSIC

GRAMS:

SOUNDS OF GULLS & WAVES

GREENSLADE:

And so in the year ex-el-one-one-one B.C., Julius Caesar set foot on the British shore and was greeted by the natives. Eh?

ECCLES:

He-llo!

CAESAR:

(GRYTPYPE) Veni, vidi, vici.

ECCLES:

Eh?

CAESAR:

I came, I saw, I conquered!

ECCLES:

Oh! Fine, fine. Well, I'm just going in for a dip. Give the old kippers in a steam. (LAUGHS; EXITS, SINGING INAUDIBLY)

CAESAR:

Brutus Moriarius, seize that Briton and prepare him for a life of slavery.

MORIARITUS:

Ave, six and two, Caesar. Cave! Here comes another Charlie Britannicus!

SEAGOON:

(SINGS) When you're tramp, tramp, tramping along the high road, with your trousers all upsiiiiide down! (TO AUDIENCE) Hello, folks! Who cares?

CAESAR:

Gad, he's up early.

MORIARITUS:

He must be one of the early Britons.

CAESAR:

Quiet, you few-months centurion. Tell the men to pull the galley ashore, quickly.

MORIARITUS:

(EXITS, MUMBLING TO SELF)

CAESAR:

Ah, good morning!

SEAGOON:

Hiyo. I see your boat's all loaded up. (LAUGHS) Going round the light-house?

MORIARITUS:

You savage English fool! This is the imperial Julius Caesar! We are Romans! Prepare yourself for combatus!

SEAGOON:

Right-oh, right-oh, yeah, right-oh. I'll go and get our lads together. Only, being Sunday, they'll be in the pubs, you know!

ORCHESTRA:

BLOODNOK THEME

BLOODNOK:

Ohhh! So! So, the Romans want to take the field against us, do they?

SEAGOON:

That's right, Britannicus. They're very keen to have a do with us, you know.

BLOODNOK:

A what? Oh!

SEAGOON:

And... and you never know, (LAUGHS), we might win!

BLOODNOK:

Win? No, we mustn't! We don't want to spoil our record!

SEAGOON:

Oh. Well, er, what'll I tell 'em, then?

BLOODNOK:

Well, tell them to put their goal on the edge of the cliffs, that'll give their goalie a bit of a rough time, won't it?

BOTH:

(LAUGH)

SEAGOON:

You don't care, do you?

BLOODNOK:

(LAUGHING) Nooo!

SEAGOON:

Right-oh. Kick off two-thirty, then.

BLOODNOK:

Splendid, splendid... (FADE)

SEAGOON:

Right, yes... (FADE)

ORCHESTRA:

ROMAN MUSIC

GREENSLADE:

And so the Britons, in their blue woad, took the field before the might of the Roman Army.

GRAMS:

CROWD SINGING END OF 'LAND OF HOPE AND GLORY' FOLLOWED BY CHEERING

CAESAR:

Brutus Moriarius, here. What kind of army is this that takes the field in blue jerseys with a ball at their feet?

MORIARITUS:

Must be some kind of trickus. Look! They're forming up.

FX:

WHISTLE

CAESAR:

That must be their signal to attack.

MORIARITUS:

Forward, men, battlus!

GRAMS:

CHARGING, FIGHTING SOUNDS

BLOODNOK:

Oh-ho-ohhh! I say, they're...

ECCLES:

Oh, here, here! Here!

BLOODNOK:

...they're a rough lot, these Romans, you know!

FX:

WHISTLE

BLOODNOK:

Ohhh!

MORIARITUS:

What? What's this? Why have stopped for?

SEAGOON:

Rough play, that's what we've stopped for, I'll tell thee. Boy! Every time I come up the wing your outside right swipes at me with a dirty big sword!

CAESAR:

(APPROACHING) I say, what is all this hold up about?

SEAGOON:

Why, it's rough play, that's what, this...

ECCLES:

Yeah, yeah.

SEAGOON:

Well, I mean... and then... and then, Jack.

ECCLES:

Yeah.

SEAGOON:

We don't do with all this javelin practice when the ball's in play! And another thing! You're only allowed eleven men on the field. I've counted 693 of yours so far!

CAESAR:

All right, I'll send one off.

SEAGOON:

Right. Carry on!

GRAMS:

RESUME FIGHTING

GREENSLADE:

The result: Romans, 900; England, 3. War stopped play.

GRAMS:

MARCHING, WHISTLING LILY MARLENE. MARCHING CONTINUES IN BACKGROUND OF FOLLOWING MONOLOGUE

SELLERS:

Like a mighty octopus, the legions of Rome spread across England. For ten years Caesar ruled with an iron hand. Then with a wooden foot. And finally with a piece of string. How much of this could Britain take?

ORCHESTRA:

LUTE MUSIC

MINSTREL:

(SPRIGGS) Caesar! I come to sing melodies divine to you!

CAESAR:

Sing on, proud minstrel.

MINSTREL:

Thank you. (SINGS)

For Caesar is a noble man,

A king of great renown.

A gentleman every inch of him,

from his feet to his head [UNCLEAR] . (SINGING OFF TO THE DISTANCE)

CAESAR:

Moriaritus? This man is a bit of a crawler. Why does he follow such a profession, Moriarius?

MORIARITUS:

For money, Caesar. He tells me he wants to die rich.

CAESAR:

And so he shall. Give him this sack of gold and then strangle him.

MORIARITUS:

Yes, Caesar.

MINSTREL:

(STRANGLING SOUNDS)

MORIARITUS:

I see that ten years in Britain have not changed your imperial Roman outlook, Caesar.

CAESAR:

True, Moriarius. Always a Roman eye.

MORIARITUS:

Will you take wine?

CAESAR:

No, thanks, I think I'll have a half of mild and a packet of crisps.

GRAMS:

CROWD SOUNDS

GREENSLADE:

Caesar, Caesar.

CAESAR:

Oh, it's Stomachus Grossus!

GREENSLADE:

Caesar, there is an angry rabble outside. We have their leader captive.

CAESAR:

Is he bound?

GREENSLADE:

Of his health, I know naught, sir.

CAESAR:

Bring him hither, sir...

BLOODNOK:

Ohh! Take your hands off me! You want to catch something? Ahh! So *you're* Julius Caesar, eh?

MORIARITUS:

Caesar is all things to all men.

BLOODNOK:

Oh, it must be hell in there! Sanitus, Sanitus. Look here, Mr. Caesar. We've just discovered why you've been here ten years. You've conquered us!

MORIARTY:

Eh?

BLOODNOK:

Well, get out! I mean, get out! Or we shall ban mid-week matches. And mid-week cigarettes as well!

GREENSLADE:

Beware, Britannicus Bloodnockus. The gods are angry.

BLOODNOK:

I know, I've just been hit by a rotten tomato. Oh, the birds, the birds!

MORIARITUS:

Why don't you stop him, Julius Caesar?

BLOODNOK:

How can I when I'm playing the part of Bloodnok?

MORIARITUS:

Now listen... Now listenus. For this rebellion, Bloodnockus, you will be thrown to the wolves!

BLOODNOK:

Not that team, no! I'm a London man, please, I...

GREENSLADE:

Good Britannicus, you have one alternative.

BLOODNOK:

What?

GREENSLADE:

You'll be freed providing you give us four good men for the Coliseum games in Rome.

BLOODNOK:

Yes! I've got some likely English Charlies who would suit you perfectly! They were very successful at the Scottish games.

MORIARITUS:

Did they do well?

BLOODNOK:

Very well. They managed to get away with their lives, you know, it's...

MORIARITUS:

Very well. Deliver those men to Caesar's royal barge at XXIXXI and a half hours tomorrow.

BLOODNOK:

I'll do that. And here is the first one, Maxelsus Geldrayicus!

MORIARITUS:

I hope he does better than...

MAX GELDRAI:

MUSICAL INTERLUDE STARTS IMMEDIATELY WITH "COME ON GET HAPPY" SONG

ORCHESTRA:

SEAGOING MUSIC; BOAT-BOUND VOICES IN BACKGROUND; SHIP SOUNDS

GREENSLADE:

And so, some months later, a Roman slave galley drew nigh to Ostia.

SLAVE DRIVER:

[ELLINGTON]

In! Out! In! Out! In!

ECCLES:

Oh, make up your mind...

BLUEBOTTLE:

Have you ever rowed a gallery before, Eccelus?

ECCLES:

Is that what we're doing?

BLUEBOTTLE:

Yes.

ECCLES:

No, I've never done this before.

SLAVE DRIVER:

Faster, you dogs!

BLUEBOTTLE:

He wants us dogs to go faster.

SLAVE DRIVER:

Silence, you scum!

ECCLES:

He wants our scum... scum to go silent.

SLAVE DRIVER:

Or do you want a taste of the lash?

BLUEBOTTLE:

No, thanks, I just had some cocoa.

ECCLES:

Oh, look, they're bringing a new slave from the reserve.

BLUEBOTTLE:

Goody!

SEAGOON:

Let me go, you devils! How dare you? Take your hands off me! Et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. How dare you chain me to this oar? I shall write to The Times about this! Jim Crint!

FLOWERDEW:

Shut up, you! It was perfectly quiet until you came along! You're not the only man chained to the oars, you know.

SEAGOON:

(SHOUTING) Now... listen to me... all of you!

FLOWERDEW:

All of me *is* listening to you.

SEAGOON:

I am the Welsh Chieftan, Caracticus Seagoon! (RASPBERRY, TRIES AGAIN) Caracticus. I, for one, will never surrender to the might of Rome! I'll fight them up hill and down and Mrs. Dale.

ECCLES:

Wait a minute, how did they take you prisoner, then?

SEAGOON:

I was in the bath. The one day a year they could catch me with my socks off.

ECCLES:

Must have been hell in there.

BLUEBOTTLE:

What are you going to do, then, Caracticus? How can we file through these chains?

SEAGOON:

(LOUD) How!?! (QUIETER) How?

BLUEBOTTLE:

Yes.

SEAGOON:

(SECRETLY) This evening I received a cake from a friend. And guess what's inside?

BLUEBOTTLE:

You mean there's...

SEAGOON:

Yes! Raisins!

SEAGOON / ECCLES / BLUEBOTTLE:

(INAUDIBLE)

SLAVE DRIVER:

Stop that talking in the back, there!

BLUEBOTTLE:

It wasn't me, sir! It was Harold Prott!

SEAGOON:

I [UNCLEAR] they want to know that!

GREENSLADE:

(VERY FAINTLY) May I present Harry Secombe and George Doe. Thank you, folks.

FX:

LASH LASHING

BLUEBOTTLE:

Aieeee! You flicked my knee!

ORCHESTRA:

SEAGOING MUSIC; BOAT-BOUND VOICES IN BACKGROUND; SHIP SOUNDS

OMNES:

(SEA CRIES, INCLUDING) from the BBC out of here.

GREENSLADE:

That night, the galley docked at Ostia and the slaves were put up for auction.

AUCTIONEER:

[MILLIGAN]

(SPRIGGS) (CLEARS THROAT) All right, new then, come on now.

SEAGOON:

(BACKGROUND) Hello, folks!

AUCTIONEER:

What am I bid for these three British-type slaves? Eccelus, a lovely piece of property. Claims to be descended from his father. No bids? Come on, anybody now.

SEAGOON:

Three dinars!

AUCTIONEER:

You fool, you're up for sale as well!

SEAGOON:

Oh!

AUCTIONEER:

There you are, a chap with initiative. All right, then. What about this last one? A pair of genuine English knees with a hat attached called Bluebottleus. Can tie knots, rub two sticks together and kill his grandmother.

LEW:

I'll bid 10,000 dinars the three.

AUCTIONEER:

Sold!

LEW:

This way lads. I've seen 'em, I've seen 'em!

SEAGOON:

I say, this is dashed decent of you to buy us. Who are you?

LEW:

Me? I do all the bookings for the Coliseum. I've seen them all, I seen them, I seen them.

SEAGOON:

So you've seen them, eh? The Coliseum? Could you get us a couple of tickets?

LEW:

You won't need any.

SEAGOON:

Oh. What's on?

LEW:

You are.

SEAGOON:

Am I?

LEW:

Yeah, tonight, tonight.

SEAGOON:

(LAUGHS) Better get the old Hobson's choice going, hadn't I? (SINGS) We'll keep a welcome in... (TO LEW) I've done the Palladium, you know? (CLEARS THROAT)

LEW:

I got a lovely voice for...

SEAGOON:

(SINGS) In the hillsides, mi-mi-mi – Oooh!

LEW:

Lovely, lovely!... Lovely! Now try shouting "help".

SEAGOON:

(CLEARS THROAT) HEEEEELLLLPPPP!

LEW:

Marvelous! That'll come in very useful.

ORCHESTRA:

SCENE-CHANGING MUSIC

LEW:

Right, now, you wait in there, boys, I'll tell you when it's your turn to go on, it'll be all right...

FX:

CLOSES DOOR BEHIND HIM

SEAGOON:

I say, what a wonderful agent that fellow is! My first night in Rome and I've got a booking already!
(LAUGHS) Well, now, let's have a look at the program!

ECCLES:

Oh! It's a good progum.

SEAGOON:

Yes.

BLUEBOTTLE:

What is the top of the bill?

SEAGOON:

Oh, it's got a lovely opening act. Let me see now, "Captive East Finchley boy scout will fight four starving lions."

BLUEBOTTLE:

Ohhhhh. I do not like this lion game.

VOICE:

(OFF) All right, baby.

BLUEBOTTLE:

Let me out of here...

FX:

RATTLES DOOR

SEAGOON:

You coward, Bluebottle! Face it like a man!

BLUEBOTTLE:

Yes, well, look at the encore there: "Caracticus Seagoon will be strangled by a gorilla."

SEAGOON:

(GULPS) Heeeeeeeelp! Let me out! You can't do this to me! I'm a British subject! I shall write to The Times about this! Help! Let me out! Heeellppp!

FLOWERDEW:

Oh, shut up, it was perfectly quiet until you came along!

SEAGOON:

It's all right for you. You're a sailor and sailors don't care.

FLOWERDEW:

(SHRIEKS) Oooooohhhoho!

SEAGOON:

Now, don't panic everybody! I've got a plan. We'll overpower the guards.

BLUEBOTTLE:

Yes!

ECCLES:

Right, I'll take my boots off.

SEAGOON:

I [UNCLEAR] that they want to know that...

GREENSLADE:

(VERY FAINTLY) May I present Harry Secombe and George Doe. Thank you, folks.

SEAGOON:

Good! (LAUGHS) Now, we'll get the keys and make our way down to the Tiber.

ECCLES:

What's the Tiber?

SEAGOON:

Half past niner.

SELLERS:

(OFF) That's what they want!

SEAGOON:

Shh! I don't wish to know this. Please!

MILLIGAN:

(OFF) I say, look here!

SEAGOON:

Shhh!

SELLERS:

(OFF) I say, I say, I say. I say.

SEAGOON:

I say. Kindly leave this prison. Shhh!

HERN:

Hello, boys and girls.

SEAGOON:

Shhh! Here comes the guard now!

FX:

DOOR IS UNLOCKED, OPENS

ECCLES:

Take that!

FX:

WOMP

GUARD:

Ohh!

SEAGOON:

Right! Run for it!

FX:

RUNNING

GREENSLADE:

Dear listeners, I thought you'd like to know that the groan of pain you heard just now was not done by a Roman soldier but by me. And I thought I did it jolly well. I'm sure you all feel the better for knowing that. (AUDIENCE LAUGHTER) Thank you. And now, Ray Ellingbaum.

RAY ELLINGTON QUARTET:

ELLINGTON SINGS MEDLEY, INCLUDING "YOU MADE ME LOVE YOU," "THIS CAN'T BE LOVE"

ORCHESTRA:

ROMAN MUSIC

GREENSLADE:

Through the catacombs our heroes managed to reach the great water pipe that runs under the Via Appia. Known, of course, in the Army as the famous Appia Pipe (UP YA PIPE)

SEAGOON:

All right, lads, I think we are safe now.

ECCLES:

Oh, oh, wait a minute, look, there's a manhole cover right above us.

SEAGOON:

Shine the beam of this candle on it.

ECCLES:

Right.

SEAGOON:

I'll push it off. Eccles? Stand on my shoulders and pull me up.

ECCLES:

Okay. (STRAINING) I'd like to see 'em do this on television.

OMNES:

STRAINING SOUNDS FROM ALL

BLUEBOTTLE:

Can I put the manhole cover back, now? Otherwise, if it rains, the hole will get wet.

SEAGOON:

No, leave it open. We don't want to lose the place. Shhh!

BLUEBOTTLE:

What?

SEAGOON:

Behind those bushes! Someone's coming! Quick!

GRAMS:

RUNNING, SPLASH

LITTLE JIM:

He's fallen in the wa-tah.

SEAGOON:

Little Jim! Little Jim! Little Jim!

BLUEBOTTLE:

Little Jim!

SEAGOON:

Little Jim! Little Jim!

LITTLE JIM:

(BABBLES)

SEAGOON:

Thank you, again!

LITTLE JIM:

Yes.

WILLIUM:

(WILLIUM) Ooooh, oh, help me, oh, oh!

SEAGOON:

Grab my hand, foot, ear, nose and teeth. Hup!

WILLIUM:

(STRAINS) Ohhhh! Cor, I didn't see that 'ole, you know? Yeah, you don't see 'em on the corners, you know?

SEAGOON:

Are you a Roman?

WILLIUM:

No, mate, in the gloman, I, er... My name's 'Annibal. You see any elephants runnin' down the road?

SEAGOON:

Elephants? You must be General Hannibal of Carthage!

WILLIUM:

No, mate. I'm Willium Hannibal. I looks after the elephants at the Coliseum, there. I'm a Battersea slave, mate, there.

SEAGOON:

How did you get captured?

WILLIUM:

Oh, 'ere's a lovely little boy.

LITTLE JIM:

Get away, dirty man.

WILLIUM:

Yeah. Well, it were my Saturday off, you see, an' I was taking the dog for a pull. An' this Roman fellow come up an' said, "Take you 'at orf!" See? Like that. And I does. An' he said, "That's a nasty lump on your bonce". An' I said, "Where?" An' he said, "There", an' pointed it out with a dirty great club. Ohh, mate, oh! When I come to I feel my nut an' he was right! There was a dirty big lump on it. But it was too late by then, you see, I was carrying buckets for the elephants at the Coliseum.

SEAGOON:

But we are English-type slaves, too! Would you care to join us?

WILLIUM:

Why? (CAREFULLY) Are you coming apart?

SEAGOON:

What's the year?

WILLIUM:

49 BC.

SEAGOON:

That proves how old that gag is! That proves how old *that* gag is.

MILLIGAN:

Yeah. Take...

SEAGOON:

That *proves* how old that gag.

MILLIGAN:

No, stop...

FX:

VARIOUS, RASPBERRIES

SELLERS:

[UNCLEAR] of a white paper, now.

SEAGOON:

(LAUGHING, SIGHS)

ECCLES:

That proves how old you are, too, ha-ha-ha.

FX:

SPLASH

LITTLE JIM:

He's fallen in the wa-tah again.

SEAGOON:

Now you can put the lid on.

WILLIUM:

I tell you what, mate. A lot of our lads joined... joined an escaped gladiola called, um, Sparticus from Prodigal. He comes only from Prodigal, Sparticus, you know?

SEAGOON:

Where is he?

WILLIUM:

He's 'iding in the 'ole at the top of Vesumruvius.

SEAGOON:

Let's to him!

ORCHESTRA:

NEW SCENE MUSIC

OMNES:

(INAUDIBLE)

SPRIGGS:

Halt, halt! Who goes there? Who... who goes there?

SEAGOON:

(SHOUTING) Escaped English slaves!

SPRIGGS:

Advance and be recognised! (SINGS) Recogniiiiised!

SEAGOON:

I am Caracticus Seagoon. I come from Wales.

SPRIGGS:

I can see you don't come from sardines, Jim.

SEAGOON:

(RASPBERRY)

SPRIGGS:

Ha, ha, ha! Nothing! Thank you. Hoorayyyyy! Hoo-rayyyy! I'll take you to Sparticus the Gladiola. Follow me.

FX:

WALKING, KNOCKING ON DOOR

SPRIGGS:

I'll knock.

BLOODNOK:

Ohhh! Oh, just a minute, oh! Don't come in, please, I'm just changing my knees. Ohh! Quite right. (OPENS DOOR) Now... Ahh! Ohh! Ohh!

SEAGOON:

Britannicus Bloodnockus! How did you get to Italy?

BLOODNOK:

Ask the writers, I've no idea.

SPRIGGS:

I have no ideeea.

BLOODNOK:

Yes.

SEAGOON:

You are Sparticus?

BLOODNOK:

Yesus. I was forced to change me name, you see? I fell out with Caesar.

SEAGOON:

You... you fell out with Caesar?

BLOODNOK:

Yesus!

SEAGOON:

How did that happenus?

BLOODNOK:

We were in a chariot and we hit a bump in the road, it went ooooooh!

ECCLES:

It was me!

SEAGOON:

Come now!

BLOODNOK:

It went ohhh!

SEAGOON:

Come now! I want the trith and nothing but the troth!

BLOODNOK:

Well, the trith is – how can I put it? – You know that saying "Caesar's wife is above suspicion"?

SEAGOON:

Yes?

BLOODNOK:

Well, I put an end to all that rubbish! Oh! Oh, the little beauty, oh!

SEAGOON:

Are we safe here?

SPRIGGS:

Are we safe?

SEAGOON:

(SPRIGGS-LIKE) Safe heeeere?

BLOODNOK:

My dear lad, we are actually *inside* the crater of an extinct volcano.

SEAGOON:

Thank heaven! Safe at last!

GRAMS:

RUMBLING SOUND

ECCLES:

Oooh!

SEAGOON:

I say, chaps? What?

ECCLES:

Was that you?

SEAGOON:

I say, look! Look! Look!

BLOODNOK:

Oh, ohhhh!

GRAMS:

EXPLOSIONS FROM VOLCANO, CAST SCREAMING

GREENSLADE:

Next week, History for Schools tells the story of The Last Days of Pompei.

SEAGOON:

Well, is that the lot for the old series there, Wal?

GREENSLADE:

Yep.

SEAGOON:

Right. 'Round the back for the old brandy, there!

FX:

FOOTSTEPS

ORCHESTRA:

END THEME

GREENSLADE:

That was the last of the present series of the Goon Show, a BBC recorded program featuring Peter Sellers, Harry Secombe and Spike Milligan, with the Ray Ellington Quartet, Max Geldray and the orchestra conducted by Wally Stott. Script by Spike Milligan and Larry Stevens, announcer Wallace Greenslade. Bobby Jay has been on the mixing panel and the special effects were supplied by Ian Cooke and Ron Belshay. The production was by Pat Dixon.

Notes:

"Mrs. Dale" is a reference to the popular radio soap of the time "Mrs. Dale's Diary".