

Ruled Britannia: The Roman Conquest of Britain



- ▶ The Emperor Claudius authorised the invasion of Britain in 43 CE
- ▶ Aulus Plautius led four Roman legions across the channel
- ▶ Togodumnus and Caratacus led the resistance
- ▶ Togodumnus was killed, Caratacus escaped
- ▶ Claudius then came to Britain to receive the surrender of eleven kings of lowland Britain

Beginning with the Claudian invasion of 43 CE, the Romans spent four decades trying to subdue the island, with varying degrees of success. Under the overall control of Aulus Plautius, who would become the first governor of the Roman province from 43 to 47 CE, four legions crossed the channel to invade Britain. Reinstating Verica as king of the Atrebatians was used as justification for this act.

At the initial invasion, the British, led by Togodumnus and Caratacus, resisted the Roman onslaught for over two days, before Togodumnus was killed at the Thames. Caratacus escaped to continue resistance further west.

When victory was assured, Claudius was brought to Britain to receive the surrender of eleven British kings. However, it should be remembered that all of these were kings of the south-eastern parts of the island, from the so-called Lowland Zone, south and east of the Fosse Way, which runs between modern day Exeter and Lincoln. The Highland Zone, which basically means upland Britain west and north of the Fosse Way, presented problems of an altogether different nature.

All parts of Britain had some experience of the Romans, but these varied widely. The lowland areas of the south-east became the most Romanised, however upland areas, such as the south-west peninsula, and what are now Wales and northern England were more akin to military zones than civil ones, with permanent legionary fortresses on their edges. The area between the Tyne-Solway isthmus (modern day Newcastle to Carlisle) and the Forth-Clyde isthmus (modern day Edinburgh to Glasgow) resembled a buffer zone, inside the Roman province for only a few decades in the mid second and early third centuries, while the far north was involved in a few battles, but never became incorporated into the Roman province.

Image: The Roman Conquest of Britain 43 – 84 courtesy of notuncurious and based on Tacitus' *Agricola* and Frere's *Britannia*

Caratacus' Opposition



- ▶ Caratacus moved west to what would today be eastern Wales
- ▶ He resisted the Romans for eight years
- ▶ Eventually he was defeated in battle by Scapula
- ▶ Caratacus fled to the Brigantes, where he was betrayed by their queen, Cartimandua
- ▶ Taken in chains to Rome, he nevertheless kept his life and settled there

Following the initial battles of the Roman invasion in the year 43, Caratacus moved west to the land of the Silures and Ordovices, in what would now be eastern Wales. Here, as a fugitive, he managed to continue resistance to the Romans for a further eight years. Things came to a head following the Battle of Caer Caradoc (i.e. Caratacus' Fort) where the Britons were defeated by a Roman force under the command of Publius Ostorius Scapula. Caratacus' wife and daughter were captured. Caratacus himself fled to the land of the Brigantes, but was handed over to the Romans by their pro-Roman Queen, Cartimandua.

Subsequently, in 51 CE, he was taken in chains to Claudius at Rome, but was nevertheless permitted to speak to the Roman senate. Tacitus quotes a dramatic version of his speech (next slide), although such quotes, as we shall see with Calgacus some three decades later, should be taken lightly, as Tacitus seemed quite keen on dramatising 'noble savages' and their opposition to Roman aggression.

However, true or not, he obviously impressed Claudius, who released him, and allowed him to live peacefully in Rome. Later, after receiving his freedom, Dio Cassius records him as asking '*Why do you, who possess so many palaces, covet our poor tents?*' (from Norman Davies, *The Isles*, 2000, p 93).

Image: An eighteenth century print held at the British Museum of Caratacus (in chains) speaking before Claudius at the Senate.

Caratacus' Speech

- ▶ *"If the degree of my nobility and fortune had been matched by moderation in success, I would have come to this City as a friend rather than a captive, nor would you have disdained to receive with a treaty of peace one sprung from brilliant ancestors and commanding a great many nations. But my present lot, disfiguring as it is for me, is magnificent for you. I had horses, men, arms, and wealth: what wonder if I was unwilling to lose them? If you wish to command everyone, does it really follow that everyone should accept your slavery? If I were now being handed over as one who had surrendered immediately, neither my fortune nor your glory would have achieved brilliance. It is also true that in my case any reprisal will be followed by oblivion. On the other hand, if you preserve me safe and sound, I shall be an eternal example of your clemency."*

The translation of Caratacus' speech above is from *Tacitus, The Annals*, translated by A. J. Woodman, 2004, Indianapolis and Cambridge, Hackett.

Tacitus is a major source of information on Caratacus' speech, the Roman attack on the Druids, Boudicca's revolt, and Calgacus' speech at the Battle of Mons Graupius (see next few slides).

It should be noted, however, that Tacitus was not an observer at any of these. He lived between approximately 56 and 117 CE, and so Caratacus speech took place before he was born. All of his works were written in the last twenty or so years of his life, after the events described. Indeed, his *Annals*, which describe the confrontation with the Druids, were his last works, written more than half a century after the event. That said, his accounts are still chronologically close, and include direct sources from earlier historians.

Roman Attack on the Druids



- ▶ The Druids' stronghold on Mona (Anglesey) was a centre of opposition to Roman rule
- ▶ Suetonius Paulinus led a Roman force to subdue it in 60/61 CE
- ▶ The attack is described by Tacitus

Less than a decade after the capture of Caratacus, the Romans were moving in on the Druids' stronghold of Mona (modern day Ynys Môn, the island of Anglesey), a centre of opposition to Roman rule. Suetonius Paulinus led the Roman force, and the events which followed are once again related by Tacitus in his *Annals* (14.30):

"On the beach stood the adverse array, a serried mass of arms and men, with women flitting between the ranks. In the style of Furies, in robes of deathly black and with dishevelled hair, they brandished their torches; while a circle of Druids, lifting their hands to heaven and showering imprecations, struck the troops with such an awe at the extraordinary spectacle that, as though their limbs were paralysed, they exposed their bodies to wounds without an attempt at movement. Then, reassured by their general, and inciting each other never to flinch before a band of females and fanatics, they charged behind the standards, cut down all who met them, and enveloped the enemy in his own flames."

Image: A National Library of Wales engraving of The Romans 'Murdering the Druids and Burning their Groves' from Thomas Pennant's 'A Tour in Wales' (1781).

Boudicca's Revolt



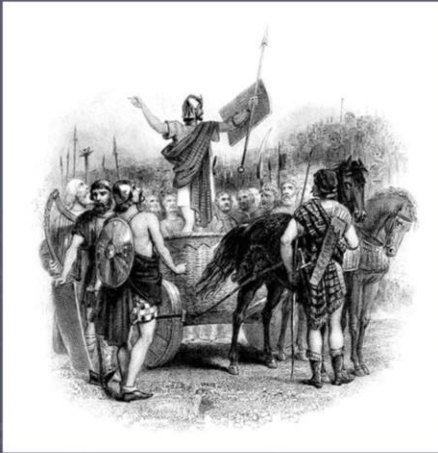
- ▶ Boudicca took advantage of Suetonius' absence to launch a revolt in the east
- ▶ 70,000 to 80,000 people were killed in her attacks on Camulodunum, Verulamium and Londinium
- ▶ Eventually she was defeated by Suetonius and poisoned herself rather than face capture

While Suetonius was busy trying to subdue the Druids in the extreme west of Britain, Boudicca, Queen of the Iceni, took advantage of his absence to launch a revolt in the east. The origins of the revolt stemmed from the agreement that Boudicca's husband Prasutagus, had reached with the Romans not to rebel against them provided he maintained internal control of his land. On his death, no doubt in an attempt to ensure that this arrangement continued, Prasutagus left half of his personal property to the Romans, and the other half to his two daughters. The Romans, however, tried to take it all. When Boudicca objected, she was flogged and her daughters were raped. This was enough for her to rally the Iceni and the Trinovantes against Roman rule.

Boudicca's army destroyed Camulodunum (Colchester) and Verulamium (St. Alban's) and burned to the ground the settlement of Londinium (London) which at the time was less than twenty years old. Some 70,000 to 80,000 people were supposedly killed as a result of the revolt, which was severe enough to lead Nero to consider withdrawing from the island. Ultimately, though, Boudicca's forces were defeated by Suetonius in the Battle of Watling Street. Boudicca poisoned herself rather than face capture.

Image: Thomas Thornycroft's statue of Boudicca and her daughters near Westminster Pier, London - a city she burned to the ground some 1800 years before the statue's manufacture - courtesy of Lily 15

The Battle of Mons Graupius



- ▶ Forty years after Claudius' invasion, the Romans were still trying to subdue the entire island
- ▶ In 83/84 CE, they claimed to have done so
- ▶ The Battle of Mons Graupius took place in Caledonia, the northernmost part of Britain
- ▶ 20,000 Romans were led by Gnaeus Julius Agricola
- ▶ 30,000 Britons were led by Calgacus

Once again, it is Tacitus who gives an account of the battle, where a Roman force of some 20,000 faced up to 30,000 Britons from Caledonia, the northernmost part of the island. The Romans were led by Gnaeus Julius Agricola, who happened to be Tacitus' father-in-law. The Britons were led by Calgacus, a character known only from Tacitus' account. He, like Caratacus some 30 years previously, is credited with having given a dramatic speech, including his opinion of the Romans.

Of the battle itself, Tacitus notes that the Romans were of course victorious. He records 10,000 Caledonian lives lost, as opposed to only 360 Romans. The other 20,000 or so Britons apparently fled into the forests, and vanished.

Following the battle, Agricola was credited with subduing the last of the British tribes, and shortly after, he was recalled to Rome. This would prove to be a mistake, and a rather premature assumption of complete victory, as the far north of the island would be a thorn in the Romans' side for centuries to come.

The Roman fortification at Inchtuhil had been built in advance of Agricola's arrival, but was evacuated a mere four years later. It could be argued that this was because it would no longer be needed in a time of peace, however, no conquering power would spend eight years building a 79 mile wall from coast to coast if all had been quiet on the northern front.

Image: An engraving depicting Calgacus' speech before the Battle of Mons Graupius from *The Pictorial History of Scotland from the Roman Invasion to the close of the Jacobite Rebellion. A.D. 79-1646*, 2 vols, vol. i, (London, 1859),

Calgacus' speech

- ▶ *"Whenever I consider the origin of this war and the necessities of our position, I have a sure confidence that this day, and this union of yours, will be the beginning of freedom to the whole of Britain. To all of us slavery is a thing unknown; there are no lands beyond us, and even the sea is not safe, menaced as we are by a Roman fleet. And thus in war and battle, in which the brave find glory, even the coward will find safety. Former contests, in which, with varying fortune, the Romans were resisted, still left in us a last hope of succour, inasmuch as being the most renowned nation of Britain, dwelling in the very heart of the country, and out of sight of the shores of the conquered, we could keep even our eyes unpolluted by the contagion of slavery. To us who dwell on the uttermost confines of the earth and of freedom, this remote sanctuary of Britain's glory has up to this time been a defence. Now, however, the furthest limits of Britain are thrown open, and the unknown always passes for the marvellous. But there are no tribes beyond us, nothing indeed but waves and rocks, and the yet more terrible Romans, from whose oppression escape is vainly sought by obedience and submission. Robbers of the world, having by their universal plunder exhausted the land, they rifle the deep. If the enemy be rich, they are rapacious; if he be poor, they lust for dominion; neither the east nor the west has been able to satisfy them. Alone among men they covet with equal eagerness poverty and riches. To robbery, slaughter, plunder, they give the lying name of empire; they make a solitude and call it peace".*

Translation from Tacitus, *Agricola*, paragraph 30, translation by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb, New York, Random House Inc, 1942.

Hadrian's Wall



- ▶ Built some forty years after Mons Graupius, between 122 and 130 CE
- ▶ It is not, and never has been, the border between England and Scotland
- ▶ Constructed during Hadrian's time as Emperor to consolidate territory
- ▶ 79 miles long and continuously occupied from the second to fifth centuries

Built between 122 and 130 CE. Hadrian's Wall was continuously occupied from 164 until the Roman withdrawal from Britain in the fifth century. Contrary to popular belief, the wall does not, and never has, represented the border between England and Scotland, not least because neither the English nor the Scots were present in Britain at the time. There were Britons to the north of it and Britons to the south of it. Rather, it was intended to secure those parts which could reasonably be considered to be under Roman control, and placed as far north as possible, bearing in mind the relatively short distance from coast to coast.

It is one of several defences built around the Roman Empire in Hadrian's years as Emperor, at a time when he was perhaps a little concerned that they were trying to bite off more than they could chew. Consolidation of territory was therefore a major factor in its construction. Despite its formidable structure, ten feet wide and fifteen feet high with forts at every mile, Hadrian's Wall should not be considered an absolute border, from either the British or Roman point of view. The Wall needed to be repaired on several occasions due to its being breached, while the Romans themselves frequently tried to extend their territory further north. Hadrian's Wall is today a UNESCO World Heritage site.

The Hadrian's Wall website can be seen here: <http://www.hadrians-wall.org/>

The Antonine Wall



- ▶ Built around 142 CE as the new northernmost frontier of the Roman Empire
- ▶ About half the length of Hadrian's Wall from the Firth of Clyde to the Firth of Forth
- ▶ It was occupied until 164 CE then abandoned for several decades
- ▶ Reoccupied briefly at the beginning of the third century before being abandoned for Hadrian's Wall

In around 142, Antoninus Pius, Hadrian's successor as Roman Emperor, ordered the construction of another wall in Britain, which was intended to replace Hadrian's Wall as the boundary of the Empire. The Antonine Wall is the most northerly Roman wall in Britain, stretching some 38 miles from the Firth of Clyde to the Firth of Forth.

Like Hadrian's Wall, its location was chosen due to the relatively short distance from coast to coast. Like Hadrian's Wall, it also had Britons to the north of it Britons to the south of it. Unlike Hadrian's Wall, the Antonine Wall was of stone base covered by turf, 10 feet high and 14 feet wide, with forts every 2 miles. It was occupied for some twenty years, and abandoned in the year 164 due to repeated attacks, before being reoccupied for a few years in the early third century. The Antonine Wall is also a UNESCO World Heritage site.

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The Antonine Wall website can be seen here: <http://www.antoninewall.org/>

Image: A Section of the Antonine Wall at Barr Hill, courtesy of Excalibur

(image courtesy of notuncurious)



Severus' Campaigns in the North



- ▶ In the year 208, Severus led a campaign against the Caledonians of the far north
- ▶ The Antonine Wall was repaired and reoccupied
- ▶ Unable to fully defeat them, he laid claim to some of their land while agreeing terms
- ▶ He died in York in 211 CE, apparently planning yet another campaign in Caledonia

Septimius Severus was Roman Emperor at the turn of the third century, and was determined to bring the entire island under Roman control. He ordered the restoration and reoccupation of the Antonine Wall, and pushed further north into Caledonia. Two forts were built along the way at Cramond and the Tay estuary, but the terrain proved difficult, and no major battles were fought. According to Dio Cassius, terms were agreed with the Caledonians, who surrendered some of their land.

Severus died in Britain at *Eboracum* (York) on the fourth of February 211, aged 66, reputedly preparing yet another campaign against the Caledonians. His two sons had accompanied him to Britain, but following his death, his son Caracalla, now himself an Emperor, gave up on the land north of Hadrian's Wall and returned to Rome.

This marks an interesting turning point in the Roman occupation of Britain, which can be considered an era of two halves, the first of which was a period of expansion or consolidation, while the second was a time of defence and eventual abandonment.

Apart from specific campaigns in Caledonia such as those of Agricola and Severus, the maximum extent of the province can be said to include all of the island as far north as the Antonine Wall. During the latter half of the Roman occupation, this province, now largely confined to below Hadrian's Wall, saw an increase in raids from the north, west, and east, and it is to this phenomenon which we shall now turn.

Image: Bust of Septimius Severus held at the Glyptothek museum in Munich.

Raids from the North

- ▶ The year 297 CE saw the first ever use of the name Picts to describe the Caledonians
- ▶ In origin, they were probably Britons who had gone their own way outside of the Roman province
- ▶ Accomplished seafarers, they regularly raided the province by land and sea from the middle of the fourth century
- ▶ They would do this either on their own or in alliance with others

The land north of the Antonine Wall, known as Caledonia, was home to a people who would later become known as the Picts. However, the first record of them being called by this name dates from the year 297. In origin, the Picts, as their place names show, are likely to be no more than Britons of the far north, and they were known as Britons in the earlier years of the Roman occupation (there is no mention of Picts in Tacitus' account of the Battle of Mons Graupius for example). Nevertheless, outside of the Roman province, north of the Forth-Clyde isthmus, they developed their own distinctive culture, identity and language in what may be the only clue as to how other parts of Britain may have developed had it not been conquered by the Romans.

Although impossible to say with certainty, one of the tribes thought to live in the region north of the Antonine Wall was known as the Maeatae, and it was they who were responsible for the revolt which led to Severus' intervention. Believed also to be great seafarers, the Picts were regularly involved in raids on the Roman province, by sea and by land, from the second half of the fourth century until after the Romans' departure. This they did either on their own, or, as we shall see later, in conjunction with others.

Raids from the West

- ▶ The western parts of Britannia were raided by Gaels from Ireland called Scotti
- ▶ Irish-speaking settlements were established temporarily in western areas of the province
- ▶ These Gaels were responsible for the inscribed Ogham stones of western Britain
- ▶ They would also work alone or in tandem with others

Confusing as it may seem, the Picts, who lived in what is now Scotland, were not Scots. Similarly, the people referred to at the time as *Scotti* were not natives of Scotland, but Gaelic speakers from Ireland (*Hibernia*). These carried out raids both on and from the western coasts of the province, initially with the aim of acquiring material wealth. During the course of the fourth century, temporary Irish settlements were established in different parts of western Britain, including what are now parts of Wales and Cornwall.

Like the Picts, they were a regular thorn in the side of the Roman governors of Britain. Believed to date as far back as the fourth century, the Irish are responsible for the Ogham stone inscriptions found in western parts of Britain and the Isle of Man, as well as Ireland of course.

Raid's from the East

- ▶ Eastern Britain was raided by Germanic Saxons and Franks from the late third century
- ▶ The coastline from the Wash to the Solent was fortified as a result
- ▶ Under the command of a Count, it became known as the Saxon Shore
- ▶ The Saxons' original homelands can still be seen in the name Saxony

The map illustrates the Roman province of Britain, divided into three regions: BRITANNIA (north), BELGICA (east), and LUGDUNENSIS (south). A red line along the eastern coast marks the 'Saxon Shore'. Key locations include Londinium (London), Eborac (York), and Caerboron (Barnborough). A legend indicates symbols for Roman sites, sites mentioned in the Historia Regum, and other related sites. A scale bar shows distances up to 100 miles.

- [illegible]

These started in the late third century, but were at their height in the fourth. Initially, the forts on both sides of the Channel may have been under one command, but by the latter half of the fourth century, responsibility had been divided into three, one for southern and eastern Britain, one for Belgica, and another for modern day Brittany and Normandy.

The Great Barbarian Conspiracy

- ▶ In 367, all of the three previous groups united in a simultaneous raid on Britain
- ▶ Known as the Great Conspiracy or the Barbarian Conspiracy they attacked from all points of the compass
- ▶ Large areas of the country were overwhelmed and the Count of the Saxon Shore was killed
- ▶ The raiders were eventually expelled by Count Theodosius over a year later
- ▶ His victory was not permanent, as the raids returned and continued until after the Romans' departure

In the year 367, all of the above groups contributed towards a simultaneous concerted effort to attack Roman Britain, variously known as The Great Conspiracy or The Barbarian Conspiracy. With a reduced military presence in the province due to pressures in other parts of the Empire, the Picts took advantage of a rebellion by the Roman garrison at Hadrian's Wall to cross by land from Caledonia. Elsewhere, in coordinated and pre-planned events, the Scotti from Hibernia landed on the western shores of the island, while the Saxons from Germania landed in the south and east.

The motivation for these attacks appears to have been personal profit. Nevertheless, huge areas of the country were overwhelmed. In northern and western Britain, cities were sacked, with civilians murdered or taken as slaves. In southern Britain, the Count of the Saxon Shore was killed. This was no five-minute raid. The invaders caused havoc for over a year, and were not driven out until late in 368, when they were eventually repelled by forces under the command of Count Theodosius.

Theodosius' victory saw a temporary return to stability. Nevertheless, raids by every one of the above groups continued until, and after, the Romans' departure from Britain.

The Romans' Departure

- ▶ The Western Empire was in serious decline after the Crossing of the Rhine in 406
- ▶ Constantine III, a Roman general based in Britain, declared himself Emperor in 407
- ▶ He took his troops with him to Gaul, leaving Britain defenceless
- ▶ Briefly recognised as co-emperor alongside Honorius, he was executed in 411
- ▶ In 410, Honorius told the Britons to look to their own defences

Throughout the fifth century, the Western Roman Empire was in decline. As far as Britain was concerned, this decline started early in the century. When Constantine III left Britain to challenge for the Roman Empire in 407, he took his troops with him. This act left the country defenceless.

Constantine ultimately failed in his attempt to become Emperor, being defeated by Honorius. As if to confirm Britain's new status, in reply to a request for help from attacks by the various peoples mentioned previously, Honorius informed the Britons by letter in the year 410 that they must look to their own defences. This act is normally regarded as signalling the end of Roman Britain.

The final appeal to Rome for help against foreign invasion, often referred to as the Groans of the Britons, was sent almost 40 years later. No help was sent. Without question, Britain was now no longer a part of the declining Roman Empire, and the Britons would have to fend for themselves.

The Roman Legacy: Christianity

- ▶ Although not Roman in origin, it was the Romans who brought Christianity to Britain
- ▶ Britain produced some prominent Christians under Roman occupation, such as Saint Patrick, Saint Ninian, and probably Pelagius
- ▶ Rome's religious influence on Britain would outlast its military and political hold by some 1100 years

The Roman province of Britannia was run for the benefit of the Empire, not for the benefit of Britons. Nevertheless, certain aspects of their time on the island would have far-reaching consequences for the people they left behind.

Initially the Romans persecuted Christians, including Christ himself of course, but some three centuries after his lifetime, the Roman emperor Constantine converted to Christianity, which then became the official religion of the Empire.

As a result the religion spread across the Empire, including to Britain, and beyond. It should, of course, be remembered that Christianity was not Roman in origin, and if anything, it shows the influence a conquered people can have on their conquerors. Nevertheless, it was the Romans who brought Christianity to Britain.

Britain produced some prominent Christians during the Roman era, including Saint Patrick, Saint Ninian and, in all probability, Pelagius. Although Rome's military and political hold on Britain ended in the fifth century, it would retain its grip in the religious sphere for at least another 1100 years.

The Roman Legacy: Vocabulary

Latin	Welsh	English
Carcer	Carchar	Prison
Fenestra	Ffenestr	Window
Furnus	Ffwrn	Oven
Liber	Llyfr	Book
Cultellus	Cyllell	Knife
Corpus	Corff	Body
Coxa	Coes	Leg
Benedictio	Bendith	Blessing
Maledictio	Melltith	Curse

Brittonic, like many other languages, borrowed from Latin at different times in its history. It is not always possible to distinguish the period when a particular word was borrowed, but the accepted figure (as postulated by Kenneth Jackson, in his *Language and History in Early Britain*, Edinburgh University Press, 1953, p. 76) for words borrowed from Latin into Brittonic, is approximately 800. Although this may at first seem like a large number, it is in fact quite small, and far less, for example, than the amount borrowed from Norman French into English following the Norman Conquest, with estimates for this figure generally starting at around 10,000. The number of Latin loan-words in Brittonic is more in line with the number of Norse loan-words borrowed into English in the Viking era. Compared to most of the other languages of the Empire, Brittonic was in a relatively strong position.

It should be noted that Latin words borrowed into English are **not** the result of the Roman occupation of Britain, as the English were not in Britain in Roman times. It's also worth remembering that the Romans themselves were not above a bit of borrowing either, and did so from a variety of languages, including Etruscan and Greek. The Welsh word *braich* for example, comes from the Latin *brachium*, which itself was borrowed by the Romans from the Greek *brachion*.

The relative strength of Brittonic as a provincial language can be assumed by the different consequences in different parts of the collapsing Western Roman Empire. The Germanic Franks who invaded Gaul took up the Latin language of that province and ultimately turned it into French. The equally Germanic Saxons, on the other hand, stuck to their own Old English (Anglo-Saxon) language. There may be various reasons why they did so, but most likely, Brittonic, rather than Latin was the dominant language of the people they encountered, even in the more urban areas, and would not have been deemed prestigious enough to be used in place of their own tongue.

The above examples have been taken from Lewis, H. *'Datblygiad yr Iaith Gymraeg'* (*The Development of the Welsh Language*) 1983, Cardiff, University of Wales Press.

The Roman Legacy: Infrastructure



- ▶ The establishment of major cities such as London, York, Chester, Manchester and Gloucester
- ▶ The construction of major road networks linking the larger civilian settlements and legionary bases
- ▶ The sharpening of the distinction between the upland 'military' zone and the lowland 'civil' zone

Some towns occupied by the Romans, such as Verulamium and Camulodunum, were established prior to their arrival, but many of the most important cities in Britain were founded by them. The most obvious and most prominent of these was of course Londinium. Whereas across the Empire, all roads may have led to Rome, within Britain, all roads led to (and of course from) Londinium. These roads linked not only civil areas but also military encampments. They predominantly cut across lowland Britain or skirted the edge of upland areas, and many of them bear an uncanny resemblance to today's motorway network. Roads are, of course, open to both natives and invaders, and it was, indeed, the invaders, who would ultimately inherit the Roman infrastructure in the lowland zone, as indicated by the Saxon names given to them at a much later date.

It was the upland zone, from the extreme South West all the way up to the Clyde, that offered the greatest Brittonic resistance and fight for independence after the Romans' departure. The lowland area is, of course, more fertile and easier to cross than the upland area. For the Romans, it was also conveniently closer to mainland Europe and the rest of the Empire.

Whether the Romans lacked the ability to fully conquer the upland zone is one thing, whether they could be bothered is quite another. Even today, upland Britain is inclined to be exploited for its natural resources, rather than developed for its own benefit. In any event, the upland areas subsequently ended up being less Romanised than the lowlands, with a greater military presence. It should be noted, however, that all of Britain was always on the fringe of the Empire, even in the lowlands.

(image courtesy of andrei nacu)

Ruled Britannia: Some points to consider

Between the first and fifth centuries the influence of the Romans was felt, to varying degrees, all over Britain, however:

- ▶ The Britons survived the Romans
- ▶ The Brittonic language survived Latin
- ▶ The Roman *civitates* system of regional administration kept pre-Roman tribal identities alive
- ▶ Although undoubtedly changed by the Roman experience, the Britons were still Britons, and still tribal ones at that

Regional administration in Roman Britain was built around the tribal system in existence before their arrival. Many of the regional *civitas* capitals consisted of two names, the first indicating the name of the town itself, and the second noting the name of the tribe, e.g.

Calleva Atrebatum – *civitas* capital of the Atrebates

Corinium Dobunnorum – *civitas* capital of the Dobunni

Durovernum Cantiacorum – *civitas* capital of the Cantiaci

Isca Dumnoniorum – *civitas* capital of the Dumnonii

Isurium Brigantum – *civitas* capital of the Brigantes

Moridunum Demetarum – *civitas* capital of the Demetae

Noviomagus Regnensium – *civitas* capital of the Regnenses

Ratae Coritanorum – *civitas* capital of the Coritani

Venta Belgarum – *civitas* capital of the Belgae

Venta Icenorum – *civitas* capital of the Iceni

Venta Silurum – *civitas* capital of the Silures

Viroconium Cornoviorum – *civitas* capital of the Cornovii

At the end of the Roman era, many Britons may well have had a multi-layered identity, but these would no doubt have included a British and a tribal identity. In some respects, the Britons of post-Roman Britain were not so different to those of pre-Roman Britain. Nothing does more to unify a people, however, than the threat of a common enemy, and it is to these that we shall now turn.