

The Roman Invasion of Britain

Roman Britain was a province of the Roman Empire from AD43 to AD409 (according to other sources: it was so from AD43 to AD410)

When did the Romans Invade Britain?

You need to know that the Romans invaded Britain three times.

The first attempt was made in 55BC by Julius Caesar. The attack Caesar launched, however, was unsuccessful as the Romans did not have a large enough army.

The second attempt happened the following year, that is, in 54BC. Caesar attacked Britain again with a larger army. Again, the Romans failed to defeat the Celts.

The third attempt to conquer was made in AD43 by Emperor Claudius and was successful. Under the command of Claudius, precisely, 40.000 Roman soldiers invaded successfully southern Britain which became another province of the Roman Empire under the name **Britannia**.

In AD43, therefore, Britannia became part of the Roman Empire.

Note:

In Roman times, there was no such country as Scotland.

Present-day Scotland was, at the time, called Caledonia.

How Long did the Romans Stay in Britain and why did they Leave?

a)- The Romans stayed in Britain from AD43 to AD409 (AD410). They stayed, in other words, for almost 400 years, which means approximately 4 centuries.

b)- By AD409, the Romans were forced to leave Britain to defend the city of Rome which was being attacked by fierce Germanic Goths and the Vandals. Soon after they left, the western half of the Roman Empire collapsed (or fell down) in 476 AD.

How Was the Relationship between the Romans and the Celts?

* Some Celts made peace with the Romans. To be able to keep their kingdoms, they agreed to obey (or follow) the Roman laws and pay taxes.

* Other Celtic leaders, however, chose to fight in order to get rid of the heavy taxes and the Romans' control of their lands.

In AD60 to AD61, one leader who chose to fight was Boudicca, the Celtic queen of the Iceni tribe. At the beginning, her warriors, who outnumbered the Roman ones, burned many Roman towns and killed hundreds of thousands of Romans. However, because it was very organized, better trained and had better weapons, the Roman army eventually won.

Why did the Romans Invade Britain?

There were many reasons why the Romans invaded Britain.

1- The Romans wanted to control as much of the world as they could. Their main goal was to make their empire as big and powerful as possible. A successful invasion of Britain simply meant power and glory.

2- The Romans wanted Britain to be part of their empire because of its abundance in natural resources. Britain's iron, copper, silver, gold, lead, and wood were all valuable to the Romans. These precious resources were needed to support their growing empire and army.

3- The Romans were angry with the Britons who had been helping the Gauls (the French) fight against Emperor Julius Caesar. As a result, they wanted to punish the Britons for their assistance and support.

4- Britain had a lot of people that the Romans could use **as slaves** and **as gladiators** for public entertainment.

How did the Romans Change Britain?

The Romans' presence in Britain caused massive change.

- **The Romans Built Roads:** The Romans were brilliant builders. They built a vast network of high-quality straight roads across Britain. The roads linked forts and towns and were essential for trade. **Watling Street, Ermine Street,** and the **Fosse Way** are examples of surviving Roman roads.

- **They** also **built luxury villas, heated public baths** (for men only), and **amphitheatres** where people could watch executions and gladiatorial games.

- **They brought the Latin language, Writing, Reading and Numbers:** Before the Roman occupation of Britain, the Celts passed information and told stories by word of mouth. **When the Romans came, many Britons** (mainly the rich and powerful) **learned Latin (the Roman language), and how to write and read.** Besides the Latin language, **the Romans introduced the Roman Numerals** (I = 1, II = 2, ... V = 5, VI = 6, etc.).

- **They also introduced Christianity:** As a new faith (religion), Christianity reached the province of Britain in the 3rd century.

Note

It is important to keep in mind that people in Britain began to write down laws as well as their history and literature with the arrival of the Romans.

- **The Romans brought lots of technology** such as **aqueducts** (which supplied towns with water from rivers, lakes, and springs) and **underground drains** (which took away dirty water and sewage).

- **They brought, too, a variety of exotic foods** like **game food** (rabbit, brown hare ...), **vegetables** (onions, cabbage ...), **fruits** (grapes...) and **nuts** (walnuts ...).

- The Romans were the first to introduce towns. Bath, York, Chester, Lincoln, Exeter, and even London are some examples of Roman towns that still exist today. The towns were often protected by walls and had many features such as underground systems through which used, dirty water and waste could be washed away, temples, forums (meeting spaces and markers), etc.

a- Londinium, the Roman name for present-day London was the biggest and most important city in Roman Britain.

b- Aquae Sulis, the Roman name for modern-day Bath was a town famous for its baths.

Roman Traces in Britain

Finally, you must know that the best example of what Romans left behind is Hadrian's Wall. Of all the Roman remains, it is probably the most famous.

The wall is located in modern-day northern England and is 73 miles long (some 118 kilometres). It was built to protect Roman Britain from the tribes of Caledonia, present-day Scotland. The most troublesome of all those tribes was the one whose members were known as the Picts. In Latin, 'Pcti' means 'painted ones' because they painted their bodies with tattoos. The Picts were known for their warlike and fearless character. Despite their military might, the Romans were never able to defeat them completely. To defend against the Picts' ruthless attacks and continuous resistance which cost the Romans both money and time, Emperor Hadrian ordered, in AD 122, the construction of Hadrian's Wall which bears his name.

Sources

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