

BOUDICCA'S REBELLION AD 60–61

The Britons rise up against Rome



NIC FIELDS

ILLUSTRATED BY PETER DENNIS

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Series editor Marcus Cowper

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ABBREVIATIONS

AE	L'Année Epigraphique (Paris, 1888 sqq.)
CIL	T. Mommsen et al., Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum (Berlin, 1862 sqq.)
Fink	R. O. Fink, Roman Military Records on Papyrus (New Haven, 1971)
Margary	I. D. Margary, Roman Roads in Britain (London, 1967)
ILS	H. Dessau, Inscriptiones Latinae Selectae (Berlin, 1892–1916)
RIB	R. S. O. Tomlin, Roman Inscriptions of Britain2 (Stroud, 1995)

Key to military symbols

 Army Group	 Army	 Corps	 Division	 Brigade	 Regiment	 Battalion
 Company/Battery	 Infantry	 Artillery	 Cavalry	Key to unit identification  Commander (+) with added elements (-) less elements		



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Provinces of the Roman Empire, AD 60



INTRODUCTION

War, as the ancient Greeks teach us, seems innate to the human species, the ‘father and king of all’, as the philosopher Herakleitos of Ephesos asserted (fr. 44). Unfortunately, we have to admit he had a point. Let us take two straightforward examples: few national borders were determined by compassion and altruism; most people live on land that their forefathers snatched from others by force. War has been and is humanity’s inseparable companion, and so new fashions and more advanced ideas, the benchmarks of human progress, do not include passive resistance. Witness the remarks of Caratacus (probably better known as Caractacus, the pugnacious son of Shakespeare’s *Cymbeline*, the only king whose memory has survived in British tradition), the fugitive and sole surviving heir to the kingdom of the Catuvellauni:

Had my high birth and rank been accompanied by moderation in my hour of success, I should have entered this city as a friend and not a prisoner. You would not have hesitated to accept me as an ally, a man of splendid ancestry, and bearing rule over many tribes. My present position is degrading to me, but glorious to you. I had horses, warriors and gold; if I was unwilling to lose

The association of the Celts with chariots is deeply ingrained in British folklore, as witnessed by Thomas Thornycroft’s impressive bronze statue, erected (1902) on the Thames embankment close to the Houses of Parliament, of Boudicca riding in her scythed war machine. Conventional wisdom is that Celtic chariots did not carry scythes on their wheel hubs, and archaeological evidence tends to confirm this – which is a shame, because it is an excellent idea. (Ancient Art & Architecture)



them, what wonder is that? Does it follow that because you desire universal empire, one must accept universal slavery?
Tacitus *Annales* 12.37.1

Caratacus seems to be the thinking warrior. How rare. Anyhow, this clever speech Tacitus puts into the mouth of the British warlord is typical of the historian – according to many the greatest of classical antiquity – echoing his constant theme concerning the destiny of Rome and the excesses committed in the name of Roman imperialism. Was Rome's mission in the world, he asked, for universal peace and prosperity, or for plundering and enslaving its subject peoples?

Roman laws of war, as Tacitus surely knew, took for granted that conquered peoples surrendered their freedom and property to Rome. Seized and taken to Rome, where the emperor Claudius pardoned him, Caratacus asked a question of imperialism famous for its irony: 'You have so much; why do you covet *our* poor huts?' (Cassius Dio 61.33.3). Whatever Caratacus did or did not actually say, it was inevitable that 'barbarians' (naturally, this term is used to designate peoples living outside the fold of the 'civilized' Roman world) should stress Roman egoistic ambition and insatiable greed. All were familiar with rapacity at local level, tribe robbing tribe, as was their primordial way, but here was grand theft on a global scale. 'Globe grabbers' roars a Caledonian war chief to his gathered people. He continues his tirade: 'Plunder, murder and rapine, these things they misname empire: they create desolation and call it peace' (Tacitus *Agricola* 30.4, 5).

Written in the mode of tragic irony, Calgacus' speech against Rome is Tacitus' editorial on 'romanization', that process whereby the lands conquered by the forces of Rome or settled by its citizens or agents were subject to a single rule of law. Modern empires have looked back on this process, which had the merit of being ambiguous, as a blessing, like their own ideals, and ascribed it to *la mission civilatrice*. For Tacitus, on the other hand, who, after all, had survived (and thrived) under Domitian, a tyrant of Stalinesque suspicion, naked barbarism was not a monopoly of bare-limbed barbarians. There are some who would round upon Tacitus and accuse him of hypocrisy. But Syme (1958: ch. 39), of sober mind and our best Tacitean authority, has argued convincingly that the historian was imbued with the old traditional Roman virtues – courage, dignity and the upholding of the law. Any deviation would receive his condemnation.

Herein lies the rub, the working of empire and its double face, bringing as it does civilization and slavery. No matter how artful the patriotic histories and the heroic poems, there were inevitable tensions that could not be smoothed or wished away. Whatever Rome was able to take from its subject peoples, there was also a responsibility towards their welfare beyond the

Serraveza marble statue of Boudicca (Cardiff, City Hall) sculpted by James Havard Thomas (1854–1921), finished in 1915 and unveiled the following year by David Lloyd George, then Secretary of State for War. We see her not only as a wronged queen appealing to her people, a woman who hungers and thirsts after justice, but also as a grieving mother comforting her daughters. The sculptor has also yielded a glimpse of a woman with substantial power and influence. (Photograph courtesy of Dom Stocqueler)





LEFT

Silver coin (Paris, Cabinet des Medailles) of the Iceni. This is a fine example of the pattern/horse coinages. It is not generally realized, but the Romans did not introduce coinage to Britain. The first British coins were minted in what is now Kent around 100 BC. They are based on a gold stater issued by Philip II of Macedon (r. 359–336 BC). On the obverse was the wreathed head of Apollo, the reverse a *biga* pulled by two prancing horses. With repeated copying, the original designs were soon lost. (PHGCOM)

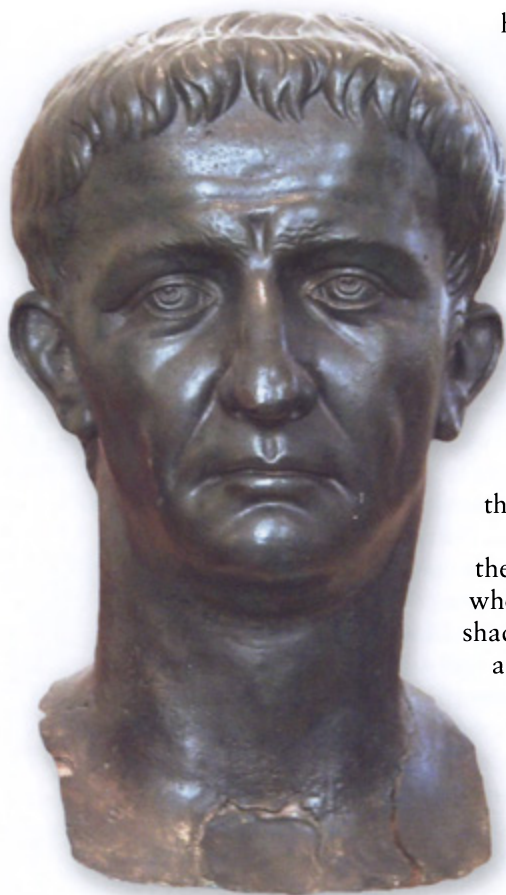
RIGHT

Silver coin (Paris, Cabinet des Medailles) of the Iceni. The obverse pattern is based on back-to-back crescents (as seen on coin left), while on the reverse, the traditional horse has been replaced by a wolf with particularly fearsome jaws. We have more coins of the Iceni than of any other British tribe, mainly because silver coin hoards were buried in the Fens at the time of the Boudiccan rebellion in an effort to save portable wealth from the avenging Romans. (PHGCOM)

maintenance of the *pax Romana*. Yet for the Romans *parta victoriis pax*, ‘peace gained by victories’ (*Res Gestae Divi Augusti* 13), the physical process of pacification and not peace itself, was the function of empire. The nature and make-up of the Roman world view was not to be passive but to exert power, to conquer and dominate, ‘to impose a settled pattern upon peace, to pardon the defeated and wear down the proud’, as Virgil (*Aeneid* 6.852–53 West) has Anchises prophesy to his son Aeneas. If you were non-Roman, you were either unfree or unruly. Roman victories meant the forcing (viz. peacemaking), not maintenance (viz. peacekeeping) of Roman peace and order on others. The world had been not so much tempted into peace as battered into submission. In short, there was no third way. This explains why, for instance, the Romans felt they could treat client kingdoms exactly as they wished.

We moderns, burdened with our increased sensitivity to the iniquities of imperialism and unjust wars, find it hard to reconcile the positive aspects of Roman civilization with Roman cruelty. This was not however a mere aberration. What we see as the belligerence, brutality and bloodthirstiness of the Romans were fundamental to their culture and to their social system. The Romans knew very well that the ability to make war, which is what gives power to any state, does not function if it cannot be used, and therefore aggression was the fundamental rationale of their foreign policy. Moreover, the monopoly of military power was in the hands of a few, first the tightly knit oligarchy of the imperial Republic, then the emperor as an autocratic avatar of that oligarchy. So it follows that not only did Roman aristocrats make war, wars made Roman aristocrats. Throughout human history aristocracies have preserved for themselves power and wealth, and what else is deemed worth having. They too have had, to a greater or less degree, a strong military tradition, and for the fiercely competitive aristocrats of Rome warfare was gravy. It gave them a purpose, an opportunity to carry out what they had been trained to do since childhood, namely exercise their undoubted physical courage and tell other people what to do. It also made them priggish, patriarchal, brutal and occasionally psychopathic.

Roman historical writing, captivated by events at the centre, rarely mentions the margins, let alone the barbarian lands beyond. Luckily for us Tacitus took a particular interest in Britannia as Cnaeus Iulius Agricola, his father-in-law and the subject of his first monograph, served there three times. Anyway, it is doubtful whether our two Britons really said these things, but their crisp appraisals of plundering Rome are highly plausible. Speeches before battle were a fact of ancient life and a convention of ancient



Bronze portrait bust of Claudius (Madrid, Museo Arqueológico Nacional), dated c. AD 50. As a 4th-century historian, Eutropius, observed: 'Claudius waged war on Britannia, where no Roman had set foot since the days of Caius Caesar' (*Breviarium* 7.13.2). Claudius, newly raised to the purple, needed some military clout. To gain this he mounted what remains the largest invasion of Britain to date. (Luis García)

historiography. However, the good ancient writers (e.g. Herodotos, Thucydides, Sallust, Tacitus) were also students of humankind, and so employed these dramatic speeches as a vehicle of interpreting the story they were relating, to make a point for their readers, not to display their own rhetorical skill. Yet, that said, Roman imperialism was concerned not with poor huts but rich fields. The economic demands of an occupying army would have been considerable. It was standard practice for ancient armies to live off the land while on campaign, so the presence of a force as large as that campaigned in Britannia would have put considerable pressure on local food supplies, even if augmented by essentials (viz. wine, olive oil) from overseas. With the establishment of permanent garrisons the demand was still there albeit now dispersed.

A pre-battle harangue of another Briton, none other than the formidable queen Boudicca of the Iceni, offers as much when she says of the legions facing her war host: 'They require shade and covering, they require bread and wine and olive oil, and if any of these things fail them, they perish' (Cassius Dio 62.5.5). Perish they might, but not from a lack of these three staples. From an early stage, Rome had exported government and law but imported cargoes of food produced by the provinces to feed its citizens and soldiers. The first provinces – Sicily, Sardinia, Africa – paid the bulk of their taxes in cereal grain. An imperial functionary may have calculated that Britannia would have produced plunder in silver, slaves and cattle. If so, then the balance sheet was to be bitterly disappointing. Rome

could possibly gain all it wanted by trade. This, after all, had been the sensible view of Augustus and Tiberius.

Returning to Boudicca. Predictably, in the eyes of our heroine, those same legions personify nothing more than Roman decadence, double-dealing and oriental servitude – and effeminacy to boot:

I thank you Andraste [a war goddess, perhaps], and call upon you as woman speaking to woman; for I rule over no burden-bearing Egyptians as did Nitocris, nor over trafficking Assyrians as was Semiramis (for we have by now gained thus much learning from the Romans), much less over the Romans themselves as did Messalina once and afterwards Agrippina and now Nero (who, though in name a man, is in fact a woman, as is proved by his singing, lyre playing and beautification of his person); no, those over whom I rule are Britons, men that know not how to till the soil or ply a trade, but are thoroughly versed in the art of war and hold all things in common, even children and wives, so that the latter possess the same valour as men. As the queen, then, of such men and of such women, I supplicate and pray to you for victory, preservation of life, and liberty against men insolent, unjust, insatiable, impious – if, indeed, we ought to term those people men who bathe in warm water, eat artificial dainties, drink unmixed wine, anoint themselves with myrrh, sleep on soft couches with boys for bedfellows – boys past their prime at that – and are slaves to a lyre player and a poor one too. Wherefore may

this Queen Domitia-Nero reign no longer over me or over you men; let the wench sing and lord it over Romans, for they surely deserve to be the slaves of such a woman after having submitted to her so long. But for us, Mistress, you alone are our leader.

Cassius Dio 62.6.2–5

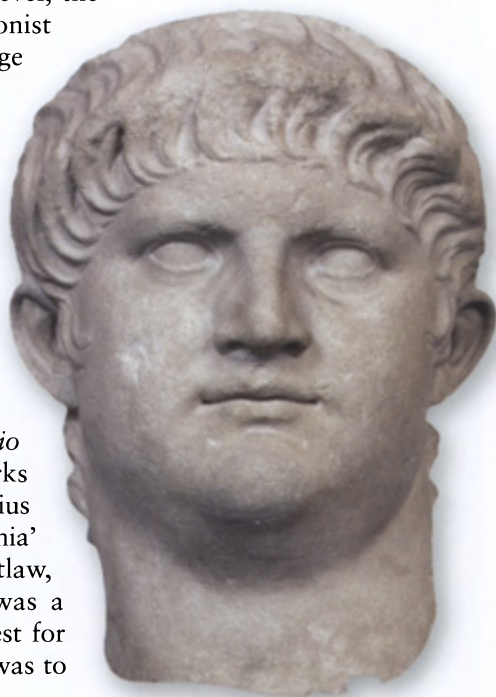
Andraste, ‘the invincible one’, was probably invoked by Celtic Britons before they engaged in battle in order to drop victory in their laps. Cassius Dio, writing nearly a century later, is often using the same source or sources as Tacitus, yet these dramatic speeches are certainly invented by the two authors. Even so, they are invented to make a point for their primary audience, the traditional Roman elite, namely to contrast contemporary Rome (the ‘First World’), fallen from the virtues of its legendary past, with the ‘noble savage’ of *Barbaricum* (the ‘Third World’). What is more, as well as a curiosity with Rome’s heart of darkness, here we have a frightening, but perversely bewitching, British warrior queen who created more nightmarish fear and bloody havoc among the cruel but literate conquerors than any male British opponent.

‘A TALE OF TWO COMMUNITIES

Strabo wrote the finest work we possess on the political geography of the Roman Empire. In a passage (4.5.3) concerning distant Britannia, as that land of mystery was known to the classical world, but was called Albion by its inhabitants, he explains why it was useless to conquer lands with poor resources; that is to say, keeping them would soon outstrip any economic benefits. Britannia certainly did not enjoy an exceedingly mild climate that allows the vine, the olive, the laurel, the pomegranate, and in short all the fruits of a Mediterranean sky to come to perfection. However, the Claudian adventure of AD 43, followed by the expansionist campaigns that followed, meant the Romans occupied a large chunk of the island and thereby added a province beyond the natural bounds of the empire. This Augustus himself had fully recognized and, despite being Caesar’s heir, he had rejected the option of invasion (Strabo 2.5.8). ‘What wall’, Josephus asks, ‘could be a better obstacle than the open sea that is the bulwark of Britannia’ (*Bellum Iudaicum* 6.331).

Appian, who, as a former financial secretary to the emperor Antoninus Pius, had sound knowledge of the cost of empire building, would later summarize in a few words what must by now have become apparent, that the ‘Romans already have the best part of Britannia and do not need the rest, for even the part they have profits them nothing’ (*praefatio* 5). Just as Cassius Dio, with Greek tongue-in-cheek, remarks about an officer who had been unsparingly reprimanded, ‘Lucius Verus did not put him to death, but merely sent him to Britannia’ (72.14). It almost seems as if Britannia was barren, outlaw, and Rome’s symbolic ‘other’. The invasion of Britannia was a happenstance of hope, its aims absurd, no more than a quest for glory. It was a misguided enterprise, and the province itself was to prove a rather expensive mistake.

Marble portrait bust of Nero (Munich, Staatliche Antikensammlungen und Glyptothek, inv. 321). Actor-Emperor, the First Beast, the Antichrist, psychotic post-adolescent, take your pick, the wicked (and doomed) Nero has been called them all. In AD 54 he succeeded his stepfather (and cousin) Claudius, supplanting Claudius’ legitimate son Britannicus, who was conveniently done away with the following year. Ironically, Britannia would become Nero’s bugbear. (Bibi Saint-Pol)



Modern bronze statue in Córdoba of Lucius Annaeus Seneca, better known as the younger Seneca (d. AD 65). Stoic philosopher, man of letters, statesman, and dramatist, the brilliant if greedy Seneca was also tutor and later adviser to Nero. His wealth was notorious, and he was once asked by what philosophical principles he had, within four years of imperial favour, amassed 300 million *sestertii*. It was a damning and unanswerable question. (Ancient Art & Architecture)



When Caius Caligula was assassinated, his uncle Claudius was dragged unceremoniously from his academic abstruseness to fulfil the need for a dynast of the Iulio-Claudian family. The surprised, and for the moment terrified, Claudius had never been even remotely considered as a possible successor to any emperor. The most unlikely of imperial figures, his sole qualification to office was that he belonged to the imperial house and was, indeed, virtually the only survivor, for the simple reason that no one had ever thought him dangerous enough to put an end to. But this was enough for his sponsors, the soldiers of the Praetorian Guard, who at this time represented the only military muscle in Rome. So the guardsmen hailed him as emperor, perhaps seriously, perhaps only in jest. But when they paraded the old man through the streets and the crowds likewise hailed him as emperor, the die was cast. 'Poor old Uncle Claudius', the family embarrassment, was now elevated to the purple. In the cutting words of Edward Gibbon, 'while they [the Senate] deliberated, the Praetorian guards had resolved'.¹ In the Senate there was talk of declaring the Republic restored and dispensing with emperors all together (Suetonius *Divus Claudius* 10, Cassius Dio 60.1.3a, Josephus *Bellum Iudaicum* 2.206–7). It was 100 years since freedom had really flourished in the Republic, since the drumhead agreement between Pompey, Crassus and Caesar, the triumvirate of 59 BC.

Even so, Claudius' position on the throne was initially insecure and his most obvious failing was his complete lack of military prestige. Worse, he stuttered badly, was lame or had a limp of some sort, had a tendency to drool, and his mind would wander so that he employed a slave whose sole job was to remind the emperor what he had been saying. Claudius was no buffoon, however. As a keen student of history, he astutely foresaw the propaganda value of an invasion of Britannia, which would enable him to emulate one of the most famous exploits of that masterly impresario, Caesar, and at the same time win for himself military glory.

Suetonius tells us (*Divus Claudius* 17.1, cf. Josephus *Bellum Iudaicum* 3.9) that the novice emperor wanted to earn the right to triumph at Rome legitimately by victory in war and not merely by vote of a scraping Senate. Indeed Claudius went so far as to be present at the final victory and to enter the enemy capital at Colchester-Camulodunum in grand style, elephants and all (Cassius Dio 60.21.4). The inscription of Claudius' (lost) triumphal arch in the Roman capital, which can now be seen on a wall in the courtyard of the Museo Conservatori on the Capitoli in Rome, declares that 'he had received the surrender of 11 British kings who had been defeated without loss in battle, and was the first to bring barbarian peoples from across the Ocean under the sway of the Roman people' (*CIL* vi.920 = *ILS* 216). By the

1. Edward Gibbon *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire* (Penguin Abridged Edition), ch. III, 77.

close of his reign, Claudius would have been hailed as *imperator*, ‘commander’, no less than 27 times (e.g. *CIL* vi.1256 = *ILS* 218), more than any emperor until Constantine the Great. He also acquired the cognomen ‘Britannicus’, which he did not use, but gave to his son.

But what type of society did those ‘11 British kings’ rule over? The Celts, although an advanced culture in many ways, particularly where metallurgy was concerned, have left no written record themselves. This lack of a true written culture was at least in part because of the Celtic custom of oral transmission of law, tradition and religious practices, with the result that we lack the equivalent of Boudicca’s side of the story. Graeco-Roman authors, much like us moderns, tended to perpetuate the idea of ‘nation types’. Short passing references in the works of Herodotus, Xenophon, Plato and Aristotle show that the Celts were known as a ‘national type’ quite early. The earlier writers give a somewhat romantic picture of the Celts with a greater stress on such aspects as single combat and the wearing of torques. The celebrated philosopher Aristotle, for instance, makes extravagant references to them, praising them for their courage, but expresses the opinion that they are rash to the point of madness. Caesar and Tacitus, who spilled much ink on these brash ‘barbarians’, are more matter of fact, though there is still the tendency to toss into the pot every imaginable anti-barbarian cliché.

What is a Celt? Well, I do not wish to visit the problem of the ‘Celts’ and who they were, suffice to say that the Celts themselves probably never existed as a distinct cultural entity (James 1999). ‘Celt’ was a general-purpose name applied by Graeco-Roman writers (Greek *Keltoi* and *Galatai*, Latin *Celtae* and *Galli*) to a mobile, warlike population group occupying lands mainly north of the Mediterranean region from Galicia in the west to Galatia (where they become the Galatians of St Paul) in the east. Their unity, at least from the 6th century BC onwards, is recognizable by common speech (viz. Celtic-speakers) and common artistic traditions (viz. Celtic art). In archaeological jargon a ‘site-type’ is the site after which a culture is named, and this artistic unity of the Celts is most apparent in the La Tène style (called from the Swiss type-site), which appears in 500 BC or thereabouts. It is a very idiosyncratic art of swinging, swelling lines, at its best alive yet reposeful.

It is generally accepted that the primary elements of Celtic culture originated with the Bronze Age ‘Urnfield people’ of the upper Danube (13th century BC), who cremated their dead and placed the bones in urns in flat cemeteries. That these people, who probably spoke a proto-Celtic language, were warlike is attested by the number of weapons, particularly swords, which they buried with their dead. From the 8th century BC iron working gradually overtook bronze working, and as a result the ‘Urnfield culture’ was transformed into the ‘Hallstatt culture’ (named after Hallstättersee in Austria).



Marble portrait bust known as the Pseudo-Corbulo (Rome, Musei Capitolini, inv. MC 561), once thought to be a portrait of Cnaeus Domitius Corbulo (d. AD 67). Another of Nero’s top-flight commanders (another of his victims too), Domitius Corbulo was the epitome of the Roman general – good-looking, fearless and altruistic, with a heightened sense of honour. (Marie-Lan Nguyen)

British tribal areas



It may have been the availability of iron weapons that allowed and encouraged cultures that we may term Celtic to appear in the Iberian Peninsula and the British Isles as early as the 8th and 7th centuries BC. Various reasons are given for these migrations – overpopulation, search for a better climate or, as they were warriors, a delight in war and booty. Nevertheless, we should not take the elder Pliny seriously when he says (*Historia Naturalis* 12.2.5, cf. Diodoros 5.26.2–3, Livy 5.33) the Celts were so enthralled by the new pleasure of wine drinking that they seized their arms, took their families and set off for the Po Valley at the double. He was, after all, writing to specific pro-Roman agendas and readily adopted, and indeed embellished, the established Celtic stereotype.

Celtic society is often characterized as ‘heroic’, dominated by the warrior ethic. Graeco-Roman observers tended to see the Celts at best noble savages, at worst as ignoble and dangerous foes. Archaeology, on the other hand, helps to correct this rather distorted view. Celtic society embraced several social orders. In the upper tier were the nobles from whom the rulers could be drawn as well as the leaders of warrior bands, and men of skill such as seers and bards. In the next group were the freemen, such as farmers and craftsmen, and below them the bondmen, such as serfs and slaves. Celtic society possessed many of the institutions of the early state, including magistrates, annually elected and answerable to councils, popular assemblies of free adult males and codes of public law. On the other hand, as among the Germans, the nobles’ prestige was measured in the size of retinues. Added to these were the nobles’ dependants or clients, the freemen attached to them in a somewhat elaborate system of clientage whereby a noble provided protection in return for food and services. Nobles displayed their status by the number and fame of the warriors who lived at their expense under an obligation to fight for them and who are expected to be faithful until death (e.g. Caesar *Bellum Gallicum* 6.13.2, 19.5, 7.40.7).

Their success in overcoming other peoples and spreading their power was largely the result of the widespread use of the horse, which gave the early Celts a great advantage in both trading and raiding. Celtic culture continued unabated with the emergence of ‘La Tène culture’, whose hallmarks were increasing power, wealth and efficiency. Indeed this new culture was so strong that it gave Celtic warriors the power to break through the defences of the classical world and reach the Mediterranean: the Etruscan town of Clusium attacked in 391 BC, Rome sacked the following year – the effect on the Romans of the sudden appearance of these wild men from the north was traumatic – and the sanctuary of Apollo at Delphi raided in 279 BC. The Greeks and Romans knew them as fierce fighters and superb horsemen, and denounced the savagery of their religious rites conducted by the priesthood, the *druïdes* in Roman sources, who apparently derived their doctrine from Britannia.

When the Romans invaded and occupied the southern half of what they knew as Britannia, Boudicca’s tribe, the Iceni, had seen the sense in coming to terms with the new order, in part as a means to secure protection from their hostile neighbours to the west, and quickly allied themselves with the invaders. This pragmatic submission meant the Iceni paid tribute to Rome but continued to be ruled by their own kings – their king in AD 43 was one Antedios, known to us only from his coinage. Seventeen years later,



Coin (Paris, Cabinet des Medailles) of the Trinovantes. This is a fine example of the pattern/horse coinages of the southern British, where the designs are wild and wonderfully anarchic, and far more interesting than their starchy Macedonian origin. Most of all, it exemplifies the tension between reality and fantasy that characterizes all Celtic art. (PHGCOM)

Prasutagus, the then king of the Iceni and a loyal ally to his Roman masters, died naming the emperor, Nero, as coheir with his two daughters. He presumably had no living son, and had hoped that such a will would safeguard his kingdom and household. 'A long and established Roman custom', says Tacitus, 'of employing even kings to make others slaves' (*Agricola* 14.1). But Rome decided otherwise, and Roman financiers, including a certain Seneca, chose the time to call in their loans. In any event, the creation of a client ruler was entirely a personal arrangement, to be appointed and dismissed at the whim of the current emperor, and believed by him to be part of the empire, whatever a client may have thought himself. Misunderstandings could arise.

According to Tacitus, who wrote within living memory of the tragic and bloody events that followed Prasutagus' demise, 'kingdom and household alike were plundered like prizes of war', the first then being incorporated, which covered large parts of today's East Anglia, into the young province. When his widow Boudicca, understandably, if perhaps unwisely, protested, she 'was flogged and their daughters raped' (*Annales* 14.31.2). Treated as if they themselves were little more than spoils of war, it seems that the Icenian royal family had fallen victim to the worse elements in Roman provincial administration. Soldiers, no matter when or where they serve, seem inclined to sexual carnality.

One way to seek promotion in the Roman Army was through becoming a *beneficiarius*, a position that was attached to a particular military officer, or civil official, and the duties varied in relation to the rank and responsibility of that officer or official. Military tribunes all had *beneficarii*, and they acted as clerks and general 'dogsbodies', but higher up the scale a soldier could become a *beneficiarius legati pro praetore*, that is to say, on the staff of the imperial governor. The governor of Britannia, always an ex-consul in deference to the size of its garrison, may have had as many as 60 *beneficarii*, and they acted in a number of roles such as toll and tax collectors, police, district officers or in the general office of the governor. Likewise, the *procurator provinciae*, provincial procurator, had a considerable staff, including *beneficarii*. The procurator, drawn, unlike the governor, from the equestrian order, was appointed by and directly responsible to the emperor, not the governor, a potent cause of friction within the provincial administration but means by which the emperor could keep tabs on his governor. The governor may have led the army of occupation, but the procurator, dealing as he did with all financial matters, paid the occupying soldiers.

Hence soldiers could become quite important people in the dual-headed administrative apparatus that ran the province, though still attached to their parent legion and drawing their pay from it, and doubtless had the opportunity to exploit their superior power and status against provincials (a problem encountered in most empires). Soldiers are, after all, in the killing business, not in the public relations business. Some of them no doubt are slightly dodgy characters who have more than a smidgen of larceny in their souls. Others again are the type who think that violence is the natural response to any threat and so forth. Such men were those who paid a visit to Boudicca and her daughters.

The underlying cause of Boudicca's rebellion was the harsh and oppressive Roman occupation and administration of Britannia: licentious soldiers, voracious tax-collectors and noble savages are commonplace themes in Tacitus, but the commonplace is often true. Unsurprisingly we have only the



Section A Welsh Pony, aka Welsh Mountain Pony. One of nine breeds native to the British Isles, the Welsh Pony is well known for its hardiness (harsh climate) and free-moving gaits (rough terrain). It is almost unlikely that there has ever been one single type of horse associated exclusively with the Celts. Yet skeletal finds and surviving depictions tell us that the Celts had short-legged, stocky horses, some of which had a wither height of no more than 100cm. (Hu)

Roman account, but it is enough to reveal crass maladministration ranging from the callously negligent to the undeniably criminal. This was a continued piece of blundering stupidity, perhaps, but Nero was always short of money, and Britannia may not have been turning out to support itself, let alone to be such a ready source of funds as Rome had originally hoped. The motives of Rome's functionaries are obscure and arguable, but of one thing we can be reasonably sure – the empire had to pay and the Rome-appointed procurator, Catus Decianus, would have been under constant imperial pressure to improve his cash flow. When the royal riches of wealthy Prasutagus thus came within the procurator's grasp, he must have rubbed his hands in anticipation. He certainly claimed that money presented to the leading figures in Britannia by the late emperor Claudius had been given in fact as only loans not as handouts. Now the sheep were to be shaven, not shorn.

Hatred of Rome was not confined to Boudicca and the Iceni. Tacitus describes how the Britons now saw themselves labouring under a pair of exploitative kings, whereas in the old days they had only to put up with a single king per tribe – 'a governor to riot in bloodshed, a procurator to work havoc on property' (*Agricola* 15.2). In other words, they had 'wolves' sent by Rome to look after them. Besides distinct orders and ranks, Celtic society in general may also have had various other social subdivisions, such as age-sets, which boys entered when they reached manhood. Young males of the same age, especially budding warriors, probably spent much of their time together, at least in the summertime, occupied by hunting and warrior contests, even surviving by skill and strength alone by seeking their fame and fortune beyond the tribe for a limited time. The Gaulish *Gaesatae* are the exemplars

Roman fortresses, forts and roads, AD 43–60



of this tradition, a fanatic warrior group of young unmarried males who stood outside the tribal system and invariably hired themselves out as mercenaries. All the same, we know from Caesar (*Bellum Gallicum* 3.9.15, 4.20.2) that British warriors fought against him in Gaul, and the practice was probably a long established one. There are hints of why this is so. Graeco-Roman authors (and snatches of early Irish poetry) describe how young warriors proved – and very likely supported – themselves when there was no war to fight by raiding the farms of common folk, entering into sexual liaisons with or raping their daughters, and otherwise making themselves a general social nuisance.

Let us return to Tacitus. Earlier he makes a revealing remark concerning the British character: ‘The Britons bear conscription, the tribute, and their other obligations to the empire, provided there is no injustice. That they take extremely ill; for they can bear to be ruled by others but not to be their slaves’ (*Agricola* 13.1). He was probably right, for few of the Britons cared for the business of soldiering and being soldiers. Later on he (*Agricola* 31.1) has Calgacus complaining of the forced levy (*dilectus*) whereby units were being raised in Britannia for service overseas. As a client kingdom of Rome, the Iceni, besides paying tribute, were expected to surrender their annual quota of near-adolescent warriors to serve as auxiliaries in the Roman Army very far from home. The forced removal of able-bodied young men from recently pacified territories diminished the danger of rebellion there too. Never a popular measure at the best of times, conscription was widely resented and goes a long way to account for the eager response to the call to arms made by Boudicca.

Tacitus writes that ‘Britons make no distinction of sex in their appointment of commanders’ (*Agricola* 16.1), and the claim is repeated when he has the chariot-borne Boudicca proclaim publicly: ‘We British are used to woman commanders in war’ (*Annales* 14.35.1). And so in her capacity as queen of the Iceni, the maltreated Boudicca raised her people in revolt, who were quickly joined by their southern neighbours the Trinovantes, a tribe that inhabited parts of today’s Suffolk and Essex. The war had begun.

CHRONOLOGY

(All dates AD)

- 40–42 Mauretanian revolt – suppressed by Caius Suetonius Paulinus.
- 41 Assassination of Caius Caligula – Praetorian Guard elevate his uncle, Claudius.
- 42 Rebellion of Furius Camillus Scribonius, governor of Dalmatia.
- 43 Claudian invasion with four legions under Aulus Plautius.

Defeat of Caratacus and capture of Colchester-Camulodunum.

Campaigns west (*legio II Augusta* under Vespasian), midlands (*legiones XX et XIII Gemina*) and east (*legio VIII Hispana*).
- 44 Triumph of Claudius – names his son Britannicus.
- 47 Cnaeus Domitius Corbulo, governor of Germania Inferior, suppresses Frisii.

Rising of Caratacus.
- 48 Publius Ostorius Scapula, second governor of Britannia, suppresses Iceni.
- 49 Ostorius Scapula transfers *legio XX* from Colchester-Camulodunum to Gloucester-Glevum (Kingsholm).
- 50 Foundation of *colonia* at Colchester-Camulodunum.
- 51 Ostorius Scapula defeats Caratacus – Silures (and others) continue to resist.
- 52 Death of Ostorius Scapula – Aulus Didius Gallus governor.
- 54 Death of Claudius – Nero emperor.

- 57–63 War with Parthia over Armenia – Domitius Corbulo takes Artaxata and Tigranocerta.
- 60 Suetonius Paulinus, fifth governor of Britannia, attacks Anglesey-Mona.
- Death of Prasutagus.
- 60–61 Uprising of Iceni under Boudicca – suppressed by Suetonius Paulinus.
- 64 Great fire of Rome (19–28 July).
- 65 Re-foundation of *colonia* at Colchester-Camulodunum (*Colonia Victricensis*).
- 66 Riots in Alexandria.
- 66–73 Jewish rebellion.
- 67 Nero withdraws *legio XIII Gemina Martia Victrix* from Britannia.
- Vespasian subdues Galilee – capture of Josephus.
- 68–69 Civil war – ‘Year of the Four Emperors’.
- 68 Caius Iulius Vindex, governor of Gallia Lugdunensis, leads revolt against Nero.
- Suicide of Nero – Galba emperor.
- Three legions (*II Augusta*, *VIII Hispana*, *XX Valeria Victrix*) in Britannia refuse to join governor, Marcus Trebellius Maximus, in revolt against Galba.
- 69 Galba murdered – Otho emperor; Vitellius emperor.
- Battles of First (April) and Second Cremona (October).
- Vitellius orders *legio XIII Gemina Martia Victrix* back to Britannia.
- 70 Rebellion of Caius Iulius Civilis – suppressed by Quintus Petilius Cerealis.
- Vespasian pulls *legio XIII Gemina Martia Victrix* (permanently) out of Britannia.
- Titus sacks Jerusalem – destruction of the Temple.
- 71 Petilius Cerealis governor of Britannia – brings *legio II Adiutrix pia fidelis*.

OPPOSING COMMANDERS

The composition of a military biography of any pre-modern personage is at best of times a difficult task. The point is an obvious one, but it needs underscoring. Moreover, not only did one of our two military leaders live in a pre-literate society, but also her military career was very brief, and by ordinary standards an unsuccessful one. On the other hand, of her more successful opponent it is said that he wrote his memoirs (Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 5.14), which are lost to us, though Tacitus, who was in all likelihood 14 years of age at the time of the Boudiccan rebellion, may have used them as one of his sources for his story on British affairs.

THE WARRIOR QUEEN

When you hear mention of a Celtic warrior queen the name Boudicca always springs to mind. Of course, she was not the only one in Celtic society. All the same, during the violent climax of her brief rebellion Tacitus tells us she addressed her host from a chariot. Boudicca and her chariot, like Alfred and his cakes or the Bruce and his spider, remains fixed in the collective psyche of the British nation.

Boudicca exists solely in the Roman written record, where, much like Athena, she bursts upon the world fully grown and fully armed. Thereafter, she becomes the stuff of nightmare. The facts therefore can be quickly related. More than a century after her demise Cassius Dio, in his original Greek, names her *Boundouika*. He also describes her as a ‘British woman of the royal family’, and even goes as far to call her *basileuōusa*, ‘queen’ (62.2.2, 6.4). Suetonius mentions in passing the rebellion, the ‘British disaster’ (*Nero* 39.1), but never the queen. Tacitus, on the other hand, never calls her a queen, specifically describing her as the *uxor*, ‘wife’, of Prasutagus, *Rex Icenorum*, ‘king of the Iceni’, and as *generis regii*, ‘of the royal line’ (*Annales* 14.31.1, *Agricola* 16.1). He names her *Boudicca*.

Whoever Boudicca’s parents were, they were likely to have been of royal or at least of noble blood, but whether she was of the Iceni or whether she was an alien is unanswerable. She is a puzzle, yet she did come from somewhere. What we do know, however, is that Boudicca, like Zenobia after her, took over the leadership of the tribal army after her husband died. Thenceforth, the figure of the Amazonian barbarian queen, fearsome yet vulnerable, captured the Roman imagination. When all is said and done, apart from her year or so of rebellion, which begins and ends as suddenly and peremptorily as an episode snatched from official records, we actually know nothing about Boudicca.

THE IMPERIAL GOVERNOR

When we first meet Caius Suetonius Paulinus, he was already a successful leader of armies and the vigorous administrator of vast provinces. Having been a praetor (AD 40), he then served as the governor of Mauretania in North Africa (AD 41), where he gained experience of fighting ‘small wars’ and of mountainous terrain. The rebellion there had come about because Caius Caligula had capriciously executed its client king Ptolemaios (AD 39), son of Iuba II and Cleopatra Selene (Marcus Antonius’ daughter), who had been placed on the throne by Augustus (Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 5.11). Apparently, as he sought to hunt down the rebel tribesmen, Suetonius Paulinus was the first Roman general to lead soldiers across the High Atlas and deep into the Sahara (Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 5.1).

We have no clue what Suetonius Paulinus did during the following decade or so. A reasonable guess is that he had once commanded *legio XIII Gemina*, which would make a high-sounding name for itself during the suppression of the Boudiccan rebellion. If so, this implies that he was already in Britannia when he was appointed governor, the province’s fifth, to replace Quintus Veranius Nepos quickly, who had suddenly died in office (AD 58). Leastways, his appointment was clearly intended to continue the expansion begun under his predecessor, who is alleged to have boasted outrageously in his will that he could have laid the province of Britannia at Nero’s feet within three years (Tacitus *Annales* 14.29.2). Suetonius Paulinus’ previous experience in the wilderness of North Africa was probably the main reason for his appointment, since operations in Britannia were now largely against the two chief tribes of what is now Wales, the Silures in the south and the Ordovices in the north.

From his appointment as governor, Suetonius Paulinus had two successful seasons in the field. ‘Could he produce victories to match the retaking of Armenia?’ asks Tacitus with Delphic ambiguity. Epigram is probably not the best vehicle by which to convey the truth, but it seems that the historian is claiming that the governor was driven by jealousy of the foremost of his contemporaries, the great Cnaeus Domitius Corbulo (*cos.* AD 39), conqueror of the desert heights of the Armenian borderland. Domitius Corbulo is the only senatorial commander of our period to be mentioned in Frontinus’ *Strategemata*, and not just once but in five separate anecdotes (2.9.5, 4.1.21, 28, 2.3, 7.2). Muscular of body, eloquent of speech, and a tough disciplinarian, he looked every inch the part (Tacitus *Annales* 13.8.3). However, Nero became jealous of him and he was obliged to fall on his sword, which he did with great aplomb, his last words being ‘I have it coming!’ (Cassius Dio 63.17.6). With that the rugged old campaigner disappears from history with a laconic final flourish (AD 67). Leastwise, despite having failed to impress Frontinus, who himself was to serve as a governor of the province, as Tacitus says, Suetonius Paulinus was ‘Corbulo’s rival in military science, as in popular talk – which makes everybody compete’ (*Annales* 14.29.3), and he had all-consuming ambition for a spectacular conquest in Britannia, which will be examined presently.



Re-enactor garbed as a Celtic woman, archaeological open day Bobigny, Seine-Saint-Denis (September 2003). Body decoration was associated in the Graeco-Roman world with savagery, and hence the enduring stereotype of the Britons going into battle naked and exposing their painted bodies. The earliest account of this practice is by Caesar, writing of his second visit to the island, and parallels with the Scythians suggest intricate curlicue patterns of lines over the exposed body surface. (Fields-Carré Collection)

It will be convenient to leap ahead to the end of Suetonius Paulinus' military career. His removal from Britannia by Nero does not seem to have done Suetonius Paulinus any lasting harm, since he achieved the consulship five years later (AD 66). He certainly did not incur the emperor's jealousy. He later served in the civil war that followed the death of Nero (AD 69), which revived the spectre of Roman warlords fighting for supremacy in Rome. Rather surprisingly, perhaps because he could be represented as heading the side of legitimacy (Suetonius *Otho* 7.1), Suetonius Paulinus supported Otho, once husband of Nero's gorgeous but notorious empress Poppaea Sabina. Otho, as well as wearing a wig imitating Nero's coiffure, found it politically advisable to honour his memory (Tacitus *Historiae* 1.78.3, Plutarch *Otho* 3.1–2, cf. Suetonius *Otho* 12.1).

He was one of Otho's legates, defeating, along with Publius Marius Celsus, Aulus Caecina Alienus, one of Vitellius' legates, at the battle *ad Castores*, a small wayside shrine dedicated to Castor and Pollux, 12 Roman miles (c.18km) from Cremona. However, Suetonius Paulinus would not allow his men to follow up their advantage and was accused of treachery as a result. When Caecina joined his forces with those of Fabius Valens, Suetonius Paulinus was very much in favour of caution, arguing that Vitellius would have no more troops and, furthermore, it was preferable to wait for the summer, by which time the Vitellians would be lacking victuals. Nonetheless, Otho overruled him and made the decision to fight post-haste, no reason being given, leading to the emperor's decisive defeat at First Cremona (also known as Bedriacum).

Deserted, Otho put his affairs in order and committed suicide with firmness and dignity. Fleeing, Suetonius Paulinus was captured by Vitellius, who was to enjoy the emperorship for a few months, and obtained a prompt pardon by claiming he had deliberately lost the battle for Otho, although this is certainly untrue (Tacitus *Historiae* 1.87.3, 90.3, 2.24–26, Plutarch *Otho* 5.3, 8.2–3). And so spared by the new regime in Rome, our man then disappears from the stage of history, and so his eventual fate in that year of destiny, when Galba, Otho and Vitellius came and went, remains a mystery.

NASA World Wind screenshot of Jbel Toubkal (4,167m), the highest point of the High Atlas, Morocco. When Suetonius Paulinus marched into what is now north Wales, he was certainly no stranger to the untamed fringes of the empire. The elder Pliny tells us that while *propraetor* in Mauritania, Suetonius Paulinus had been the first Roman to cross the High Atlas, taking some ten days for the ascent, and then penetrating beyond them 'as far as a river which bears the name of Ger' (*Historia Naturalis* 5.1), which is perhaps the Niger. (NASA)





LEFT

Monumentum de la Adamklissi: metope XXVIII (Istanbul, Arkeoloji Muzesi, inv. 1434 T). Here we see two bareheaded and unarmoured legionaries dressed in tunics and wearing *foculis*. The wearing of the *gladius*, with its distinctive pommel and handgrip, high on the left hip, the orthodox position, suggests they are centurions. Although a little beyond our period of study (it dates to the early years of the 2nd century AD), the centurions who fought in the Boudiccan rebellion would have been none too dissimilar. (Fields-Carre Collection)

RIGHT

Reconstruction of a 'cut-down' style *scutum* in use by Augustus' time, interior view (Caerleon, National Roman Legion Museum). Here we see the reinforcing, which consists of a framework of wooden strips glued or pegged into place. Also visible is the horizontal handgrip, which sits safely behind the metallic boss. Full-size reconstructions such as this one weigh in the order of 5.5kg. (Fields-Carre Collection)

And just a final note. Two future governors of the province served under Suetonius Paulinus in Britannia, soldiers both, namely Quintus Petilius Cerialis, commander, *legatus legionis*, of *legio VIII Hispana*, and Cnaeus Iulius Agricola as a senior military tribune, *tribunus laticlavius*, believed to have been awarded this commission by the governor himself. We do not know exactly in which legion he served in, but a case could be made for *legio II Augusta*, nor does Tacitus record any direct personal involvement by Agricola in the squashing of the rebellion, but his skill as a writer certainly leaves the reader with the impression Agricola had been involved. Anyway, as these two military gentlemen have a part to play in our story, we shall be meeting them again.

OPPOSING ARMIES

Like the whole story of Boudicca, we have only one version, the Romans', on which to rely. Of course, archaeology has allowed us to steal a glimpse of Boudicca's people, though much must be left to suggestion, logic, speculation and even good old-fashioned imagination. Cemeteries were an initial key to the archaeology of the Celts and many of the greatest surviving La Tène treasures come from burials. In common with many earlier societies, the dead were buried in full clothing, perhaps in some cases clad in especially fine ceremonial garments and accoutrements. The clothes rarely survive, although occasionally the processes of corrosion preserve impressions and even fragments of textiles on metal objects (jewellery, metal fastenings, etc.). Weapons and even food and drink were also buried, and thus grave goods can tell us much about how the Celtic warrior was dressed armed and provisioned.

We know of course that the Roman Army of our period consisted of two main elements, the legionaries, who were all citizens, and the auxiliaries, who were recruited from non-citizens, *peregrini*. Yet, surprising as it may seem, there is no history of the Roman Army by any ancient author and little detailed examination of military practices. Among the Roman historians Tacitus has some detached references to the arms and equipment of legionaries and auxiliaries, and to tactical formations adopted by such generals as Domitius Corbulo and Agricola. It is indeed curious that Joseph ben Matthias, better known to history as Josephus, wrote the best descriptions of the army in war and peace. An aristocratic priest chosen by the Sanhedrin, the Jewish council of state, to defend Galilee in the rebellion against Rome, Josephus witnessed first hand the legions of Vespasian and his son Titus in action against his Jewish countrymen. Like Polybios before him, as a defeated foreigner Josephus was very much interested in seeking what were the primary factors that contributed to the superiority of Roman arms.

THE REBELS

Generally speaking, the Celts had a fearsome reputation for aggressiveness, even among the militaristic Romans, and there can be no doubt that warfare played a central role in Celtic society, a society that was tribal, hierarchical and familiar. For the nobles and their warriors, raiding offered the opportunity of wealth, prestige, and reputation to further political aspirations at home. Retinues could be maintained only by actual fighting and they seem to have been at least semi-permanent and, added to their clients, formed a strong

nucleus for the tribal army. Polybios, writing of the Celts much earlier, notes that nobles ‘treated comradeship as of great importance, those among them being the most feared and most powerful who were thought to have the largest number of attendants and associates’ (2.17.12). These crack warriors were, however, far outnumbered by the mass of ordinary warriors composed of all free tribesmen able to equip themselves, and here we have to remember that the majority of Boudicca’s people, even though bound to a local chieftain by dues of clan service, were farmers who planted crops and raised cattle. There would have been a few raw youths and greying men feeling their years too.

As these tribesmen appear to have gone to war in bands based on clan, familiar, and settlement groupings, which made a man’s people the witness of his behaviour, it is likely too that the boldest (or more foolhardy) and best equipped naturally gravitated to the front rank of a war band (Rawlings 1996: 90, Goldsworthy 1998: 59). Equipment in general was fairly scanty, the combination of shield, long slashing sword, and short thrusting spear(s) forming the war gear of most warriors. Body armour seems to have been very rare, and a warrior probably usually went into the fray dressed only in a pair of loose woollen trousers. The appearance of the individual, his size, expressions and demoniacal war cries, added to the din of clashing weapons and the harsh braying of the carnyx, or war horn, were clearly intended to intimidate the enemy before actually reaching them. Diodoros says ‘their trumpets are of a peculiar kind, they blow into them and produce a harsh sound that suits the tumult of war’ (5.30.3). Such brouhaha was sufficiently startling and cacophonous to set the enemy on edge, as the Romans were at Telamon according to Polybios (2.29.5–9), and if he was persuaded he was going to lose before an actual *mêlée* began, then a Celtic charge, oftentimes launched without warning, would drive all before it.

Tactics – if tactics we may call them – were therefore unsophisticated, and relied on a wild, headlong rush by a screaming mass of warriors in a rough phalangial block headed by their war leaders, followed up by deadly close-up work with ashen spear and long sword. As was common in tribal armies, the warriors, unmilitary but exceedingly warlike, were poorly disciplined and lacked training above the level of the individual. And so after a violent and savage onslaught launched amid a colossal din, the individual warrior battered his way into the enemy’s ranks punching with his shield, stabbing with his spear or slashing with his sword. The muscular agility of Celtic warriors was a thing to behold, and those on the opposing side could only stand like pebbles on a beach, waiting for the smothering surge.

One certain thing about the army of Boudicca; it was a rambunctious host, containing as its flower some of the best manpower any British warrior ever saw – rawboned, sinewy men used to handling weapons and to the



Replica of Celtic warrior's garments (Rodheim-Bieber, Museum Keltenkeller) The origins of woven multicoloured plaid-style cloth go much further back in Celtic history than this period – it is only in the 17th and 18th centuries that clans started adopting specific patterns. From contemporary descriptions and textile fragments recovered through archaeology, we know that most items of clothing were colourful, well made and of wool or linen. (Gorinin)

RIGHT

Iron swords from La Tène. Tacitus (*Agricola* 36.1) describes the British swords as long, blunt-ended, and unsuited to fighting in a confined space or at close quarters. The target areas for such a weapon were the head, shoulders (if visible), the right arm and the left leg. Perhaps surprisingly they were worn on the right-hand side, hanging from a waist-belt of metal chain or leather, which passed through a suspension loop on the back of the scabbard. It is in fact fairly easy to draw even a long blade from this position – Roman legionaries, likewise, wore their swords on the right. (Ancient Art & Architecture)



BOTTOM

Celtic double-edged sword with scabbard (New York, Metropolitan Museum of Art, inv. 1999.94 a-d), mid 1st-century BC. Found in Ballyshannon, County Donegal. The exquisitely worked copper alloy hilt terminates in a modelled head of a warrior. His arms and legs are V-shaped, hands and feet round knobs, body three turned ring mouldings. This anthropoid hilt was probably intended to enhance the power of the owner and serve as a talisman in battle. The blade, now amalgamated with the copper alloy scabbard, is 50cm in length and of iron. (PHGCOM)

outdoor life, men who could get along very well on poor rations and skimpy equipment, bands of free tribesmen, who, as they always seem to be in history, were fit, agile and extremely belligerent men with a positive taste for fighting. Like all tribal warriors, they were shrewd, quick-witted, wary, cunning, and ready for all emergencies, and while there was no attempt at discipline, their courage was tempestuous, excitable, self-conscious. We should remember that only an adolescent without wife or children would leap into battle careless of his fate.

So much for the generalities. In the early encounters of Celt and Roman, even though the bulk of a Celtic army fought on foot, it was the chariot that roused the curiosity of the Romans. 'In warfare they use chariots', so says Strabo (4.5.2). Pulled by two yoked horses and driven by skilled charioteers, it appears that the main use of the war chariot was for causing panic. The charioteers, who normally sat rather than stood, would drive their light-framed vehicles against the enemy lines in a rush, sparring and skirmishing, the accompanying warriors scattering javelins as they did so, and this, coupled with the mere speed and noise of the dashing chariots, would be enough to unsettle the opposition. Tacitus, during the retelling of the battle of Mons Graupius, says that prior to the general engagement 'the flat space between the two armies was taken up by the noisy manoeuvring of the charioteers' (*Agricola* 35.3). Once this initial stage had been accomplished, the warriors dismounted from the chariots and, in true 'Homeric' style, fought on foot, while the charioteers kept the chariots at the ready to effect, if necessary, a speedy retreat, as admirably described by Caesar (*Bellum Gallicum* 5.1).



It was Diodoros who noted that the tribes of Britain ‘used chariots as tradition tells us the old Greek heroes did in the Trojan War’ (5.21.5). Admittedly, Diodoros was on the lookout for Homeric parallels in Celtic society, and his account is somewhat anachronistic and admitted to be based upon hearsay. Despite this, however, Diodoros’ statement can be expanded and elucidated upon by referring to the source from which it probably came, Caesar’s *commentarii*. Caesar had a keen eye for the extraordinary, and his own description of British charioteers in action presents a marvellous picture of their skill and agility:

In chariot fighting the Britons begin by riding all over the field hurling javelins, and generally the terror inspired by the horses and the noise of the wheels are sufficient to throw their opponents’ ranks into disorder. Then, after making their way between the cavalry squadrons they jump down from their chariots and engage on foot. In the meantime their charioteers retire a short distance from the battle and place the chariots in such a position that their warriors, if hard pressed by numbers, have an easy means of retreat to their own lines. Thus they combine the mobility of cavalry with the staying power of infantry; and by daily training and practice they attain such proficiency that even on a steep incline they are able to control the horses at a full gallop, and to check and turn them in a moment. They can run along the chariot pole, stand on the yoke, and get back into the chariot as quick as lightning.

Caesar *Bellum Gallicum* 4.33

There is of course the problem whether the author meant their own cavalry squadrons or those of the enemy, though *equitum turmes* in all likelihood refers to the enemy cavalry. For example, Livy (10.28–30), although he provides no details, tells us that at Sentinum (295 BC) the Senonian Gauls deployed 1,000 chariots, and these counterattacked and routed the Roman cavalry, which was pursuing the broken Gallic cavalry of the right flank. The chariots then pursued in turn, following the routed Roman cavalry into the ranks of the Roman infantry. Seeing the legionaries thus disordered, the Gallic infantry charged and pushed the Romans back. Likewise, Tacitus tells us that at the zenith of the fighting at Mons Graupius (AD 83) the Roman cavalry squadrons ‘had routed the war chariots’ (*Agricola* 36.2). Besides, if Caesar’s chariot warriors are infiltrating their own cavalry, whom are they supposed to be fighting? Celtic chariots were certainly not designed to crash through the opposition, and one of their main weaknesses was the vulnerability of the horses that drew them, such large targets being an easy prey to those armed with missile weapons (e.g. Cassius Dio 60.20.3). On the contrary, one of their preferred ploys was probably the feigned retreat, to draw off small parties of the enemy who could then be tackled by the chariot warriors leaping down to fight hand to hand.

In Caesar’s vivid description, only the running out along the chariot pole is non-Homeric. However, the Celtic chariot was open-fronted, thereby enabling the chariot warrior to perform such acrobatic feats. The Homeric chariot, as far as we can tell, had a cab enclosed on three sides, made up of a heat-bent wooden frame which probably stood at waist height or thereabouts. Evidence for the Celtic chariot is derived from pictorial



Battersea shield (London, British Museum, inv. 225a), dredged from the bed of the Thames at Battersea Bridge (1857), dated c. 350–50 bc. Being both too short (<0.9m long) and too flimsy to offer reasonable protection, this shield (facing), with its brazen polish and scarlet glass, had no place on the battlefield and was probably meant for flamboyant display. Consisting of restless, swelling patterns and gaudy enamelling, the spectacular decoration is typically in the La Tene style. (Werner Forman Archive)

BOTTOM LEFT

Bronze helmet (London, British Museum) in the 'jockey-cap' style, 1st century AD, found in the Thames. We should remember that only durable objects have survived, and most of them dug from the ground and dredged from watery places, viz. grave goods and votive offerings. The skull piece is largely adorned with *repousse* (raised decoration hammered through the reverse side) while the neck guard was once richly adorned with enamel and glass. (Werner Forman Archive)

BOTTOM RIGHT

Republican *denarius* (London, British Museum, inv. BMC 1185), struck in c.110 BC by one SCAVR(us), possibly the son of Marcus Aemilius Scaurus (cos. 115 BC). L(ucius) LIC(inius) and CN(aeus) DOM(itius) were fellow moneyers. It shows Bituitos, war chief of the Arverni, standing naked in his chariot holding spear and shield, with a carnyx beside him. Eventually captured, it is said that he was carried through Rome in his own silver chariot. (Werner Forman Archive)

representations, such as the Etruscan stele from Padua, which help to provide information concerning the wooden and leather parts that no longer survive, and excavation work, such as the vehicle burials of east Yorkshire, which more often than not renders the actual metal components. Let us take one of these vehicle burials as emblematic, namely the two-wheeled chariot-like construction (chariot, cart or carriage?) unearthed at Wetwang Slack in the summer of 1984.

The spoked wheels had been removed from the vehicle and laid flat on the floor of the grave pit. The skeleton of a warrior rested on the wheels and was accompanied by an iron slashing sword in a bronze and iron scabbard, no fewer than seven spearheads, which were scattered across the body, and fragments of the iron spine of a shield. Laid on one of the wheels were two iron horse bits, on the other a line of five bronze and iron terrets (loops through which the reins passed) marked the position of the yoke of the vehicle. Naturally, the wooden and leather parts of the vehicle had all rotted away, but the wooden components such as the chariot pole were located by filling the voids left behind with plaster or by recording the darker stains left in the soil of the excavation by wood tannins, such as the spokes of the wheels. The two iron tyres survived in good condition.

The case of the British chariot offers an interesting example. The kind of vehicles Caesar describes so well must have had special qualities such as lightness for speed and quick turning, yet toughness to stand up to the rough going and heavy usage. Suspension is all important, and Britain is not noted for its table flat plains, so strapwork floors make sense. On the Padua stele and some republican Roman coins we see chariots with double-arched sides, each depicted with a Y configuration inside. It has been suggested that this Y was actually a thong of braided rawhide, which suspended an independent riding platform inside the cab frame. These thongs were probably hung from two sets of flexible ash arches. Field trials using a full-scale replica of the Wetwang vehicle found in March 2001 proved the suspension system stable. It was this vehicle that was used as the basis for an experimental reconstruction in the BBC series *Meet the Ancestors*, and according to Mike Loades, 'it was possible to either sit or stand at walk, trot, canter and gallop over rough, bumpy terrain. It was even possible to throw javelins from the moving vehicle and hit targets of cardboard Romans' (2005).





LEFT

Waterloo helmet (London, British Museum), dredged from the bed of the Thames at Waterloo Bridge (early 1860s), dated c. 150–50 bc. Made from sheet bronze, the helmet is held together with bronze rivets. It remains the only helmet to be found in southern Britain, and it is the only Iron Age helmet with horns to be found anywhere in Europe. Horns are often a symbol of the gods. (Michel Wal)

BOTTOM

Mouth of a Celtic carnyx (Edinburgh, Museum of Scotland), found in a peat bog near Deskford, Banffshire (1916), and dated to the mid-1st century AD. Wrought in sheet bronze, it is in the manner of a stylized boar's head. The modern reconstruction (shown right) has ears and mane rather like those depicted on the Gundestrop cauldron or on the Arc de Triomphe, Orange, and the original, when found, still retained a movable wooden tongue, which no doubt added to the cacophony when the instrument was blown. Its eyes would have been of brightly coloured enamel. (Fields-Carré Collection)

To judge from his silence, chariots were no longer in fashion when Caesar was busy conquering Gaul, and he was somewhat surprised to find them still in use by the tribes of Britannia, a surprise that engendered the aforementioned little sketch. As their prowess and agility as horsemen increased, so the Gauls gradually gave up the chariot. In Britannia, on the other hand, we shall meet them again alongside Boudicca, though at the final battle Tacitus refers to only one chariot – that of Boudicca herself – but Cassius Dio implies (62.12.3, 4) they were still used in numbers – and of course Tacitus' father-in-law would meet chariots again in large numbers when he faced the Caledonii at Mon Graupius (*Agricola* 35.3, cf. 12.1).

If we return to Diodoros, we are offered by him a description of the possible tactical role of the Celtic chariot as was earlier used by the tribes of Gaul:



In their travels and when they go into battle the Gauls use chariots drawn by two horses, which carry the charioteer and the warrior; and when they encounter cavalry in the fighting they first hurl their javelins at the enemy and then step down from their chariots and join battle with their swords.... They bring with them as retainers freemen enrolled from among the poor, whom they used as charioteers and shield bearers in battle. And when the armies are drawn up against each other it is their custom to come forward from the line of battle and challenge the noblest of their adversaries to single combat, brandishing their weapons before them and striking terror into the enemy. Diodoros 5.29.1–3

Re-enactors of *legio XV Apollinaris*, headed by an *aquilifer* bearing the unit's eagle-standard and a *centurio* wearing *lorica hamata*. The *centurio* is clearly modelled on the Facilis tombstone (see photograph on page 55), though his modern counterpart has been 'awarded' a fine set of *torques* and *phalerae*. Roman mail was generally of iron, alternating with rows of closed washer-like rings, and riveted rings running horizontally. This produced a very flexible, reliable, strong armour. (Matthias Kabel)

All in all, the tactical role of the Celtic chariot can be divided into three basic tactical functions. First, prior to battle being joined the chariot warriors hurl their javelins. Second, having performed this initial task, the chariot warriors dismount to fight on foot (being nobles they could step into no man's land and issue challenges to enemy champions for individual demonstrations of *tour de force*). Third, in the meantime the charioteers retire a safe distance in case they are needed for a swift pursuit or hurried retreat. Additionally, though of course Celtic chariots were not designed for charging headlong into a well-formed enemy formation, there is no tactical reason why they would not be driven into shaken formations, which are likely to flinch and fail, or have the ability to run down fugitives.





LEFT

Rough-and-ready limestone relief showing four legionaries (Saintes, musée archeologique, inv. E 1344 MAS-PB). Before Marius the army embraced men who risked life for a principle, and often men of social standing, competence, or wealth and independence of character. After Marius, the army included, as a rule, only men without the necessities of life, hapless men who could not do as well in any other occupation. (Fields-Carre Collection)

RIGHT

Re-enactor of *legio XV Apollinaris* wearing *lorica segmentata* (Latin term first coined in 16th century). The armour itself consists of broad, overlapping ferrous (iron originally, but 18-gauge mild steel in modern reconstructions) bands fastened to internal leather straps. The fitments (buckles, hinges, tie-hooks, tie-rings, etc.) that tie together the four sections (right and left collar, right and left girdle) were made of brass. (Matthias Kabel)

THE ROMANS

In war Rome had no secret weapon and the basis of its world domination was forged from an indomitable blend of unlimited manpower, military skill and might, relentless aggression, doggedness in adversity and moral superiority, all of which was occasionally compounded with a large dose of self-deception and a long streak of cruelty. Its wars had always been fought with a pitiless dedication to total victory. The Roman Army, which relied on heavily equipped infantry, was best suited for high-intensity warfare against a dense agricultural population with conquerable assets. It was less suitable for mobile warfare against lightly equipped opponents. Rome would settle for what its army could handle and its agriculturists could exploit, and thus excluded the steppe, mountains, forest and deserts.

The army itself seems to have been most attractive as a fixed career to the poorest citizens. For such men, the legions offered a roof over their head, food in their bellies and a regular income in coin. No surprises here. Basic military pay was not the road to riches, but there was always the chance of bounties and emoluments, and the certainty of a discharge bonus. Overall a soldier's life was more secure than that of an itinerant labourer, and he enjoyed a superior status too. Of course, we must remember the harsher side of such a career. A soldier, who must be in the thick of things, ran the risk of being killed or crippled by battle or disease, but also on an everyday basis was subject to the army's brutal discipline. Most of us are familiar with the centurion 'Give-me-Another', *cedo alteram*, so called because of his habit of beating a soldier's back until his gnarled vine-stick, *vitis*, snapped and then shouting for a second and a third (Tacitus *Annales* 1.23.1). Yet to many people in the empire who pulled through at subsistence level, the well-fed soldier with his ordered existence in his well-built and clean camp must have seemed comfortably off. So the legions became permanent units with their own numbers and titles and many were to remain in existence for centuries to come, and *III Gallica* may be taken as a specimen of them all.

LEFT

Reconstruction of a *pilum* (Caerleon, National Roman Legion Museum). Legionaries were equipped with two of these, which they hurled before drawing their swords. Instead of having the whole business end tempered, the tempering was confined to the pyramidal iron head. This ensured that the iron shank remained quite soft and liable to buckle and bend under the weight of the wooden shaft when the missile stuck in a shield or a body. (Fields-Carre Collection)

CENTRE

Reconstruction of a 'Pompeii'-type *gladius*, carried by a member of *legio XV Apollinaris* re-enactment group. Sometime during the early 1st century AD, a new pattern of *gladius* began replacing the 'Mainz' type. This pattern of the *gladius* had parallel cutting edges and a triangular stabbing point. This was carried high up on the right-hand side for ease of withdrawal in order not to expose the sword arm. In the press of a pitched battle, the legionary excelled in delivering the quick, sharp thrust. (Matthias Kabel)

RIGHT

Re-enactor of *legio XV Apollinaris* carrying a replica *pugio*. A *pugio* was regarded as a personal weapon and a tool, and its scabbard decoration subject to an individual's taste (and purse). Soldiers seldom wasted time on aesthetics, and generally their equipment remained functional. However, it seems even ordinary rankers were quite prepared to invest considerable sums in decorated daggers and scabbards. Evidence of wear patterns on surviving examples show that the two lower suspension rings, as seen here, were unused. (Matthias Kabel)



Part of Caesar's consular series formed in 48 BC, *legio III Gallica* had been serving in the east since Philippi (42 BC). The legion had fought well under Marcus Antonius against the Parthians (36 BC), as it did again under Domitius Corbulo (AD 57–63), and had been part of the garrison of Syria as early as 4 BC, if not before (Plutarch *Marcus Antonius* 42.4, Tacitus *Annales* 15.6, 25–26, Josephus *Bellum Iudaicum* 2.38). With the Flavian army at Second Cremona (AD 69), a battle fought through the hours of darkness, at dawn the soldiers of *III Gallica* turned in true eastern manner to salute the rising sun. The Vitellian army thought they were hailing reinforcements and promptly fled (Tacitus *Historiae* 3.24.3–25.1, Cassius Dio 65.14.3). Recruiting locally (e.g. Tacitus *Annales* 13.7.1, 35.3), the legion had obviously acquired a tradition of worship of an oriental solar deity, perhaps Iuppiter Optimus Maximus Dolichenus (from the small town of Doliche in distant Commagene), a warlike solar Baal directly associated with the creation of weapons with iron. In various dedications from soldiers the god is described as 'born where iron is born' (e.g. *ILS* 4301–3), and we get the impression that they showed a more faithful devotion to the pantheon of their native east. Exposed to the perils of war, they needed mighty and vigilant protectors, saviour gods who were often armed, like them, in Roman style, but also like them originating from the Levantine, Palmyra or Commagene. With the coming of the Flavian dynasty, this eastern cult spread rapidly throughout the empire and is a striking illustration of Juvenal's *in Tiberim defluxit Orontes* (*Satires* 3.62). Anyway, after Cremona *III Gallica* was billeted for a time at Capua, and then stationed once more in Syria. But this legion was not an anomaly. The soldiers of Vitellius' Rhine legions, marching through northern Italy en route to Rome several months before Second Cremona, seemed to the local residents an uncouth and foreign band (Tacitus *Historiae* 2.21, cf. 4.65).

Legions were probably in the order of 5,000 men strong (all ranks) and composed of Roman citizens, for citizenship was a qualification for entry into a legion. Legionaries were mostly volunteers, drawn initially from Italy (especially the north), but increasingly from the provinces. As the 1st century AD progressed, many recruits in the west were coming from the Iberian provinces, Gallia Narbonensis, and Noricum, and in the east from the Greek cities of Macedonia and Asia Minor. Thus by the end of the century the number of Italians serving in the legions was small. Statistics based on nomenclature and the origins of individuals show that of all the legionaries serving in the period from Augustus to Caligula, some 65 per cent were Italians, while in the period from Claudius to Nero this figure was 48.7 per cent, dropping even further to 21.4 per cent in the period from Vespasian to Trajan. Thereafter, the contribution of Italians to the manpower of the legions was negligible, individual volunteers preferring service in the more prestigious and much more lucrative Praetorian Guard (Webster 1979: 108). It must be emphasized, however, that these statistics represent *all* legionaries in the empire. In reality, there was a dichotomy in recruitment patterns between the western and eastern provinces, with legions in the west drawing upon Gaul, Iberia, and northern Italy, while those stationed in the east, as we witnessed with *legio III Gallica*, very quickly harnessed the local resources of manpower.

Legions consisted of ten cohorts (*cohortes*), with six centuries (*centuriae*) of 80 men in each cohort – just after our period of study, from AD 70 or thereabouts, the first cohort (*cohors prima*), the most senior, would be of double strength, that is five centuries of 160 hand-picked men. Commanded by a centurion (*centurio*) and his second in command (*optio*), a standard century (*centuria*) was divided into ten eight-man subunits (*contubernia*), each *contubernium* sharing a tent on campaign and pair of rooms in a barrack block, eating, sleeping and fighting together. Much like small units in today's regular armies, this state of affairs tended to foster a tight bond between 'messmates' (*contubernales*). Male bonding would explain why many soldiers (*militēs*) preferred to serve their entire military career in the ranks despite the opportunities for secondment as *beneficarii* to specialized tasks or for

LEFT

Reconstruction of a 'cut-down' style *scutum* in use by Augustus' time, exterior view (Caerleon, National Roman Legion Museum). The face was decorated with the unit's insignia – either in applied panels or painted – as Tacitus (*Historiae* 3.23.2) makes clear in his description of Second Cremona. However, it is not clear whether the entire legion shared a common shield device, or whether each cohort was distinguished in some way, perhaps by colour. For re-enactors, at least, the stylized wing, thunderbolt and lightning-flash design, the emblem of Iuppiter, is most popular. (Fields-Carré Collection)



RIGHT

Low-cut relief decorating a column base from the *principia* of Mainz-Mogontiacum showing an auxiliary infantryman with oval *clipeus* and Coolus helmet (Mainz, Mittelrheinisches Landesmuseum). As well as a *lancea* in his right hand, he carries two spares in his left. This fighting man was in no way inferior to a legionary, despite his non-citizen status, and certainly not lightly equipped. Note the detail of his *caligae*. (Fields-Carré Collection)



LEFT

Bronze Coolus type 'E' helmet (London, Museum of London) dredged from the Thames at London. With its larger, flatter neck guard and the addition of a brow ridge to deflect downward blows, the Coolus helmet started to replace the Montefortino pattern that had been commonly worn by legionaries of Caesar's legions. This helmet pattern is named after a find made near the village of Coole in the Marne basin. (© Museum of London, UK/Bridgeman Art Library)

RIGHT

Imperial Gallic type 'G' helmet, aka Weissenau type (Bad Deutsch-Altenburg, Archaeological Museum Carnuntum). An intact example of this pattern was dredged from the Rhine at Mainz, while similar fragments were found at Colchester dating to the Boudiccan rebellion. Considered the 'typical' mid-1st-century legionary helmet, though the bronze Coolus was probably more common as common-sense practice suggests older-pattern helmets were still in service. (Matthias Kabel)

promotion within their unit. Nonetheless, a soldier (*miles*) who performed a special function was excused heavy fatigues, which made him an *immunis*, although he did not receive any extra pay for his skill (*Digesta* 50.6.7). Finally there was a small force of 120 horsemen (*equites legionis*) recruited from among the legionaries themselves. These *equites* acted as messengers, escorts and scouts, and were allocated to specific centuries rather than belonging to a formation of their own. Thus the inscription (*RIB* 481) on a tombstone from Chester-Deva describes an *eques* of *legio II Adiutrix pia fidelis* as belonging to the *centuria* of Petronius Fidus. Citizen cavalry had probably disappeared after Marius' reforms, and certainly was not in evidence in Caesar's legions. The first, noticeable reference to the 120 horsemen of a legion comes from Josephus (*Bellum Iudaicum* 3.68), though the *equites* seem to have been revived as part of the Augustan army reforms.

The legion's commanding officer was a legate (*legatus Augusti legionis*), appointed by the emperor from those of the Senate who had already held the praetorship at Rome. He was thus a man of considerable seniority, and his tenure would usually be three or four years, after which he would return to Rome hoping to be appointed to the consulship and ultimately a governorship. The other senior officers were six tribunes, one was a senator designate (*tribunus laticlavus*) the other five were equestrians (*tribuni angusticlavii*), and 60 centurions of graded seniority. In the hierarchy of command the senatorial tribune always ranked next to the legate, by virtue of his noble birth. His was a one-year post held before the age of 25 and prior to his entering the Senate as a quaestor. Such men were gaining first-hand experience in readiness for commanding their own legion in a few years' time. Their role was largely advisory.

Next in order of seniority came not the remaining five tribunes, but the *praefectus castrorum*, the prefect of the camp, a post that required considerable and detailed knowledge of the legion, its personnel and the daily rounds of duties. As the name implies, the *praefectus castrorum* had general charge of the encampment or base. In addition he saw to the maintenance of artillery, the medical services and military hospital, and supervised weapons training. Obviously, this officer provided a degree of professionalism and continuity that the two senatorial officers might seem to lack. Immediately below the *praefectus castrorum* ranked the five equestrian tribunes. The legionary tribune

held no independent command in the legion, but had already experienced leadership as a commander of an auxiliary infantry unit and thus was in a position to offer (if asked) the legate some practical advice on the handling and disposition of auxiliary forces in his command area. Equally, the legionary tribune would have the chance to see a legion in action from within, which would stand him in good stead when (or if) he went on to further commands, such as a commander of an auxiliary cavalry unit.



Full-size manikin of an auxiliary cavalryman (Cirencester, Corinium Museum). A characteristic feature of cavalry helmets is the extension of the cheek guards to cover the ears, commonly shaped as simulated ears. The model is also wearing a Gallic-type mail shirt with shoulder cape. Note the *spatha*, a sword type based on the La Tene sword, which hangs at the right hip. (Fields-Carre Collection)

The centurions in each cohort retained under the principate the republican titles: *pilus prior* and *pilus posterior*, *princeps prior* and *princeps posterior*, and *hastatus prior* and *hastatus posterior*. Within each cohort the order of seniority among the centurions reflected their former positions in the old threefold battle-lines of the manipular legion. The senior centurion of each cohort was the *pilus prior*, followed by the *princeps prior* and *hastatus prior*, then by the three *posterior* centurions in the same order. The senior centurions of the legion were those of the first cohort with the *primus pilus* at their head, collectively known as the *primi ordines*, ‘front rankers’, and the junior those of the tenth cohort. Promotion thus consisted of a movement towards a lower numbered cohort. The *primus pilus*, who commanded the first century of the first cohort and had charge of the eagle standard, was the most senior centurion of the legion and invariably went on to become the *praefectus castrorum*, his last post before retirement.

When territory was added to the empire, a garrison had to be put together to serve in its defence. New legions were sometimes raised, but normally these green units were not themselves intended for service in the new province. So when an invasion and permanent occupation of Britannia became a hard possibility under Caius Caligula, two new legions, XV *Primigenia* and XXII *Primigenia*, were formed in advance. Their intended role was as replacements for experienced legions earmarked to join the invasion force: *legio* XV *Primigenia* to release *legio* XX from Neuss-Novaesium, and *legio* XXII *Primigenia* to release *legio* XIII *Gemina* from Mainz-Mogontiacum. The invasion force that eventually sailed for Britannia in the summer of AD 43 consisted of XX and XIII *Gemina*, along with *legio* II *Augusta*, which had been at Strasbourg-Argentoratum, this base was now left vacant, and *legio* VIII *Hispana* from Sisak-Siscia in Pannonia, which may have accompanied the outgoing governor, Aulus Plautius, on his journey to take up his new post as the expeditionary commander. It must be said, however, that only II *Augusta* and XX are actually attested as taking part in the invasion itself (Tacitus *Historiae* 3.44, Suetonius *Vespasianus* 4.1, Dio Cassius 60.20.3, *ILS* 2696, AE 1924.78), though all four legions are recorded very early in Britannia (*CIL* v.7165, *RIB* 292, 294, 296).

Nevertheless, transfers of legions to different parts of the empire could leave long stretches of frontier virtually undefended, and wholesale transfers became unpopular as legions acquired local links. An extreme case must be that of *legio* II *Augusta*. Part of the invasion army of AD 43, this legion was to be stationed in the province for the whole time Britannia was part of the empire. Many recruits were the illegitimate sons of serving soldiers or veterans, that is, *origo castris*, ‘born in the camp’ (e.g. *ILS* 2304). It is likely that most of them were born to soldiers from local women living in the nearby *canabae legionis*, the extramural settlement associated with the garrison. Therefore, the custom developed of sending not an entire legion to deal with emergencies, but detachments drawn from the various legions of a province. Detachments from legions operating independently or with other detachments were known as *vexillationes*, named after the flag, *vexillum*, which identified them. Until the creation of field armies in the late empire, these *vexillationes* were the means of providing temporary reinforcements to frontier armies for major campaigns.

Under Augustus the rather heterogeneous collection of auxiliary units (*auxilia*) serving Rome were completely reorganized as cohorts (*cohortes*) and ‘wings’ (*alae*), and given regular status within the new standing army.



Trained to the same exacting standards of discipline as the legions, the men were long-service professionals like the legionaries and served in units that were equally permanent. Recruited from a wide range of warlike peoples who lived just within or on the periphery of Roman control, with Gauls, Thracians and Germans in heavy preponderance, the *auxilia* were freeborn non-citizens, *peregrini*, who, at least from the time of Claudius, received full Roman citizenship after 16 years of honourable service. This also included the grant of *conubium*, the right to formally marry women who were not citizens, which was to have far-reaching effects on the rapid spread of citizenship in the provinces. Auxiliaries, however, were still expected to serve 25 years under arms, and by the time of Trajan citizenship and discharge became coincidental.

Tacitus tells us that the Batavi, on the lower Rhine, paid no taxes at all, but ‘reserved for battle, they are like weapons and armour, only to be used in war’ (*Germania* 29.1). From him (*Historiae* 1.59.1, 2.27.2, 66.2, 4.12.3, 15.1, cf. *Annales* 2.8, 11) we hear of eight *cohortes*, which served in Britannia, and one *ala*, some 4,500 warriors from the tiny region of Batavia serving Rome at any

Roman auxiliary cavalry re-enactor (Roman Army Tactics, Scarborough Castle, August 2007), wearing a replica *spatha*. This modern replica gives a good idea of the longer, slimmer swords used by cavalymen. It required only one hand – vitally important when you are perched on the back of a horse – and surviving blades range from c.65 to 91.5cm in length with a width usually of under 4.4cm. Pommel, handgrip and guard were generally similar to *gladius* types. (David Friel)



Reconstruction of an oval *clipeus*, the typical flat shield carried by auxiliary infantrymen and cavalrymen alike (Cirencester, Corinium Museum). An oval *clipeus* was only slightly lighter than a cylindrical *scutum*; its greater height compensating for the latter's greater width. (Fields-Carré Collection)

one time. He also remarks on a *cohors Sugamborum* under Tiberius, as 'savage as the enemy in its chanting and clashing of arms' (*Annales* 4.47.4) although fighting far from its Germanic homeland in Thrace. Further information concerning these tribal levies comes from Tacitus' account of the ruinous civil war. In AD 69, when Vitellius marched into Rome as the next short-lived emperor, his army also included 34 *cohortes* 'grouped according to nationality and type of equipment' (*Historiae* 2.89.2).

Take the members of *cohors II Tungrorum* for instance, who had been originally raised from among the Tungri who inhabited the north-western fringes of the Arduenna Silva (Ardenne Forest) in Gallia Belgica. Under the Julio-Claudian emperors it was quite common for such units to be stationed in or near the province where they were first raised. However, the tragic events of AD 69, when a large proportion of the *auxilia* serving on the Rhine mutinied, led to a change in this policy. Thereafter, though the Roman high command would not abandon local recruiting, it would stop the practice of keeping units with so continuous an ethnic identity close to their homelands.

Auxiliary cohorts were 480 strong (*quingenaria*, 'five hundred strong') – *milliaria*, 'one-thousand strong', units would appear around AD 70. Known as *cohortes peditatae*, these infantry units had six centuries with 80 soldiers to each, and, as in the legions, a centurion and an *optio* commanded a century, which was likewise divided into ten *contubernia*.

Cavalry units known as *alae*, 'wings', which originally denoted the allies (*socii*) posted on the flanks. In our period they were *quingenaria* (512 total), and are thought to have consisted of 16 *turmae* (Hyginus 16, cf. CIL iii.6581), each with 30 troopers (Fink 80, cf. Arrian *Ars Tactica* 18.3) commanded by a *decurio* and his second in command the *duplicarius*. Drawn from peoples nurtured in the saddle – Gauls, Germans, Iberians and Thracians were preferred – the horsemen of the *alae* provided a fighting arm in which the Romans were not so adept. Additionally there were mixed foot/horse units, the *cohortes equitatae*. Their internal organization is less clear, but usually assumed, following Hyginus (26–27), to have six centuries of 80 men and four *turmae* of 30 troopers, that is to say, *cohors equitata quingenaria* (608 total). An inscription, dated to the reign of Tiberius, mentions a *praefectus cohortis Ubiorum peditum et equitum*, 'prefect of a cohort of Ubii, foot and horse' (ILS 2690), which is probably the earliest example of this type of unit. It may be worth noting here that this Tiberian unit was recruited from the Ubii, a Germanic tribe distinguished for its loyalty to Rome (Tacitus *Germania* 28.4). In Gaul Caesar had employed Germanic horse warriors who could fight in conjunction with foot warriors, operating in pairs (Caesar *Bellum Gallicum* 7.65.5, 8.36.4, cf. Tacitus *Germania* 6.2). Organized, disciplined and well trained, the pride of the Roman cavalry were obviously the horsemen of the *alae*, but more numerous were the horsemen of the *cohortes equitatae*. Having served for some time as infantrymen before being upgraded and trained as cavalrymen, these troopers were not as highly paid, or as well mounted as their brothers of the *alae*, but they performed much of the day-to-day patrolling, policing and escort duties.

In addition, as in earlier times, there were specialists fulfilling roles in which Roman citizens, better utilized as legionaries, were traditionally unskilled. Among the Romans, like the Greeks before them, the bow seems never to have been held in much favour, though after the time of Marius it was introduced by Cretan mercenaries serving Rome. Cassius Dio (62.12.4) mentions archers serving with Suetonius Paulinus in Britannia, but he adds no details. However, the best known of these specialists were archers from Syria. It is possible they were equipped as regular auxiliaries rather than as their exotic appearance on Trajan's Column would indicate (e.g. Scene lxx, which depicts them with high cheekbones and aquiline noses, wearing voluminous flowing skirts that swing round their ankles). Certainly 1st-century tombstones show archers in the usual off-duty uniform of tunic with sword and dagger belts, *cinguli*, crossed 'cowboy' fashion.

OPPOSING PLANS

Republican *denarius* (Oxford, Ashmolean Museum), struck in c.48 BC by L(ucius) HOSTILIUS SASERNA. It shows a seated charioteer and a standing warrior riding into action on a Celtic chariot. The carriage superstructure has double-arched sides, within each arch a Y-configuration. It is possible that the Y was a braided rawhide thong, the four of which suspended a springy riding platform of strapwork. Clearly the arch and Y strap suspension system made the Celtic chariot an effective (almost) all-terrain war machine. (Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford, UK/Bridgeman Art Library)



Though Tacitus praises Agricola for his encouragement of less tangible aspects of Roman culture, such as the adoption of the Latin language and the Roman toga, this policy in fact had a fairly long pedigree, for the desire to make Britannia into a toga-wearing nation is ascribed by Seneca (*Apocolocyntosis* 3.3) to Claudius. But of course, what we are dealing with here is local leaders, undoubtedly members of the old tribal aristocracy, who were given positions of authority within the new ruling system. It was simply a matter of effective government, as Tacitus himself recognized when he scathingly said ‘the simple natives gave the name of “culture” to this factor of their slavery’ (*Agricola* 21.2).

When the Romans invaded, three prominent Britons saw the political advantages in siding with these powerful aggressors. The king of the Iceni, we know about. Cogidumnus – or Cogidubnus, as he has become better known – had been appointed king over the old territory of the Atrebatas. We know him from only one sentence from Tacitus and a damaged inscription found in Chichester (1723) referring to him as *regis magni Britanniae* (or *Britannorum*), ‘great king of Britannia (or the Britons)’ (*RIB* 91). The king was presumably an Atrebatian ‘prince’ or a renegade British warlord who had thrown in his lot with the Romans at an early stage – and seems to have continued to rule, as Tiberius Claudius Cogidubnus, ‘ever most loyal, to within our own memory’ (Tacitus *Agricola* 14.1), in other words, at least until the Flavian period. In all probability, Tacitus’ use of the superlative *fidissimus*, ‘most loyal’ implies the client king displayed his unswerving loyalty to Rome during the Boudiccan rebellion. If true, and we have no reason to doubt Tacitus here, Cogidubnus had proved a valuable tool of conquest ‘according to the old and long-received principle of Roman policy, which employs kings among the instruments of servitude’ (*ibid.*).

The third great client tribe was the Brigantes, ruled at this time by the pro-Roman queen Cartimandua, an equally formidable yet fascinating lady. She would end the career of Caratacus when she turned him over to Claudius after he sought asylum in her court, divorced and disposed of her consort Venutius in favour of his armourbearer Vellocatus, thus making the former underling the new consort, and survived a major revolt within her scandalized tribe (Tacitus *Historiae* 3.45,



Annales 12.36, 40). Confronting friend and foe with cunning military schemes, seductive wiles, and ruthlessness, she was a conniving queen worthy of Irish vernacular tradition. Anyway, during the rebellion Cartimandua remained steadfast in her loyalty to Rome and thus did not throw in her lot with Boudicca. Some would say because Boudicca irritated Cartimandua in a way that only a female rival can irritate another female. This may be so, but Cartimandua was plausibly promised more wealth and power. Others say that the two were related, but there is no evidence to support this. As ever the real weakness was tribalism. 'Rarely will two or three tribes confer to repulse a common danger', muses Tacitus. 'Accordingly they fight individually and are collectively conquered' (*Agricola* 12.1). For the Boudiccan rebellion his comments certainly ring true.

The Iceni had revolted once before. The occasion was when Publius Ostorius Scapula, never a man to hesitate in the face of peril, had threatened to disarm them, along with others, but this was bound to come about eventually, since civilians were forbidden to carry arms, except hunting weapons, within the empire. More pertinently, Ostorius Scapula, who had just taken up his appointment as governor, the province's second, had to deal with the serious emergency in the west created by Caratacus. Thus his main objective here was to reduce the southern and eastern tribes to dumb acquiescence until Caratacus had been squashed. The Iceni, 'a tough people who had never been crushed in war' (Tacitus *Annales* 12.31.2), would have been especially angered by the disarming policy of the new governor since they had never given the Romans cause for concern and were indeed, up to that point, their allies, a voluntary act that had come to pass ostensibly under the previous governor, Aulus Plautius.

The Wetwang chariot reconstruction by the Somerset wheelwright, Robert Hurford. He cleverly devised a suspension system that employed two sets of flexible ash wood arches from which hung thongs of braided rawhide. This arrangement suspended a strapwork riding platform, which was attached to the chassis below it by flexible leather straps. The traction power was provided by two yoked horses, a Section A Welsh Pony (Nugget) and a Dartmoor cross (Fudge), both with a wither height of more or less 112cm. (Photograph courtesy of Mike Loades)



ABOVE

Bronze Celtic Coolus type 'A' helmet, aka Mannheim type (Brussels, musée du Cinquantenaire) from near Tongres (ancient Atuatuca Tungrorum) in the province of Limburg, once home to the Celto-Germanic people known as the Tungri. This skull piece would originally have been fitted with large cheek guards, possibly scalloped in the Celtic style. Headgear such as this would have been owned by the sort of warrior who provided the cutting edge to one of Boudicca's war bands or fought from one of her chariots. (Michel Wal)

RIGHT

Reconstruction *scuta* belonging to re-enactors of *legio XV Apollinaris*. Shields were expendable. Intended to deflect or absorb blows, shields would often have been damaged or destroyed in battle. Even so, *scuta* didn't just have a defensive function in combat. The large, centrally placed metallic boss projecting from the external face of a *scutum* made it a handy offensive weapon that could be used in a thrusting manner to drive back or punch opponents in close-quarter fighting. (Matthias Kabel)

In fact, it is likely that the alliance with Rome dates back to Caesar, as he mentions (*Bellum Gallorum* 5.21.1), along with the Trinovantes, the *Cenimagni*, presumably the Iceni, and if so, this may be the beginning of their early pro-Roman policy. Anyhow, it was following this uprising and its crushing that Prasutagus was made a client of Rome, with some degree of independence, and given the kingship of the entire tribe. Of course, it was his death that was to spark the rebellion led by his wife.

In discussing the causes of the rebellion, Tacitus makes no mention of what Cassius Dio considers to be the chief causal agent, namely financial issues. Cassius Dio not only alleges that the procurator was demanding the return of money that had been given to leading Britons by Claudius, but also that Seneca, the virtual co-regent at Rome, was recalling all at once a large personal loan of 40 million *sestertii* at a high rate of interest (62.2.1). Tacitus clearly knows of the charge (*Annales* 13.42.3), but discounts it. Of course, recalling such loans would be a normal precaution before the incorporation of a client kingdom. Yet the story as told by Tacitus, as we know, describes how Boudicca sought revenge against the malevolent Romans who seized her land, publicly flogged her, and raped her daughters. Their actions turned a willing client into an implacable foe and lit a flame of resentment that cost thousands of British lives, men, women and children, and almost lost the Romans their foothold in Britannia.

REBEL PLAN

In the mind of Tacitus, Boudicca was an avenging spirit, like one of the terrible phantom Furies, who are traditionally female. Yet no conceivable source except our own imagination can tell us the thoughts that passed through the



mind of Boudicca before she took the fateful decision to rebel. She had two choices: to punish or not to punish. In order to punish, she had to go to war, and she did. But what if she had not chosen to punish? The Romans would not have suffered but, instead, would have enjoyed the fruits of their crime with perfect impunity. Then, as we know, the world burst into flames.

In the boiling temper of the time the quick answer was a blow, to strike hard and strike at once. The decision may have been a mistake, but to argue so is to indulge in the second-guessing that is so simple long after the event. It would be a gamble at best – a bet that the rebels could somehow score an offensive victory decisive enough to bring the war to a close. The business would have to be a quick, one-punch affair – a cocky raid, rather than a regular campaign – for rebel resources were just not adequate for a sustained effort. This is a very simple plan, but then, a good plan should be simple. Besides, to state the obvious, the passive defensive policy may make a long agony, but it can never win a war.

As for long-term aims, we should be suspicious of grandiose and vague ideas. Securing the independence of Britannia and the overthrow of Roman barbarism. These were objects too ambiguous to be easily understood. Simply put, Boudicca would round on hated Rome and its symbols. Besides, the atmosphere of those early days of the rebellion was probably one of bright optimism: the rebels seemed to be in control, the purpose of the struggle seemed clear, which, after the glutinous complexities of Roman fraudulence, must have come as a huge relief to Boudicca. However, whatever concerted plan she may have had at the outset was soon to disappear in the tide of bloodletting and looting, for we are told by our principle recorder Tacitus that her followers thought only of plunder: 'Bypassing forts and garrisons, they made for where loot was richest and protection weakest' (*Annales* 14.33.3), the rebellion had turned into a jamboree, an opportunity of a lifetime. It appears Boudicca had created a monster that would end up devouring her.

ROMAN PLAN

To advocate that Suetonius Paulinus had a plan would be wrong. He was to react to a distant but dangerous uprising that caught him totally unawares. It was Petilius Cerialis, the commander of *legio VIII Hispana*, who made the first response, dashing to the aid of the beleaguered veterans at Colchester-Camulodunum and doing so on his own initiative. It is probable that his brief was to protect the rearward areas while the bulk of the provincial army was away in the west. Yet his subsequent career shows him to have been a rash and impetuous soldier, the sort of man spoiling for a fight, and his one thought at this time was to nip the rebellion in the bud.



Low-cut relief decorating a column base from the *principia* of Mainz-Mogontiacum showing two legionaries in action (Mainz, Mittelrheinisches Landesmuseum). The first legionary is hunkered down behind his *scutum*, his *gladius* held horizontally and close. Such a posture does not minimize the risk of being wounded by a projectile penetrating his shield. That would be achieved by bearing his shield away from himself. He is, however, ready to perform that most effective of Roman drills, punch-jab. Curiously, though the two wear the Imperial Gallic helmet, they lack body armour. (Fields-Carré Collection)



Re-enactors of *legio XV Apollinaris* demonstrating that armour should not be perceived as a bar to rapid movement, in this particular case during the charge to contact. The Roman legionary of this period was primarily a trained swordsman, the tactical emphasis being most definitely thrust and cut, as opposed to the routine cut and thrust. In the formal setting of a set-piece encounter, he was a formidable fighter. We can assume that the warriors of Boudicca faced a sight, albeit on a much grander scale, such as this at the final battle. (Matthias Kabel)

Rome had only 27 legions in the whole of its empire at the time, and in Britannia there were four of them, a province grossly over-garrisoned in relation to its worth, and Boudicca's rebellion nearly threw them out. Of the four, *VIII Hispana* got itself ambushed, and thus too badly mauled to play any further part in the campaign, while *II Augusta*, then in the south-west of the province, failed to join up with the governor. Thus Suetonius Paulinus was left with only those troops under his immediate command, namely *legio XIII Gemina* (afterward *XIII Gemina Martia Victrix*) and *legio XX* (afterward *XX Valeria Victrix*) plus some auxiliary units.

When Suetonius Paulinus got to hear of the rebellion, he did not dither. In the crisp words of Tacitus, he made the stark choice 'to sacrifice the single town of Londinium to save the province as a whole' (*Annales* 14.33.2). In all of this the governor was quite correct, by the standards of military logic. Unfortunately, however, military logic was not going to be controlling this war. What was going on between Roman and Briton was a violent extension of a political contest, and the rules and axioms of formalized warfare were not going to mean much. Indeed, by those rules and axioms the rebels were in a poor shape.

THE CAMPAIGN

Panoramic view of Stonea Camp, an Iron Age hill fort (the lowest in Britain) on a former island in the peat fens near March in Cambridgeshire. It is possible the hill fort was the location of the battle mentioned by Tacitus between Icenian rebels and Roman auxiliaries under the governor, Ostorius Scapula. Archaeology has revealed not only an Icenian coin hoard at the site, but also human remains, including smashed infant skulls and sword-marked adult bones, which suggest a wholesale slaughter of the vanquished. (Bob Castle)

Tacitus records the date of the rebellion with great precision, saying it broke out in AD 61 and lasted for one year, and modern scholars disagree about its accuracy. There is an awful lot of action for one campaigning season, and the next governor, Publius Petronius Turpilianus, seems to have been appointed to succeed Suetonius Paulinus before the end of AD 61. The apposite question is, therefore, did the rebellion start in AD 60 (Syme 1958: 765–66, Sealey 2000: 12–13). On the other hand, Tacitus is generally careful about chronology, when he combines the accounts of two campaign seasons he either says so (e.g. *Annales* 13.9), or does not date them (e.g. *Annales* 14.23–26), and a good case can be made for fitting Suetonius Paulinus' campaign into one season, and for putting Petronius Turpilianus' appointment, if not his arrival, into AD 61 (Carroll 1979).

With the bulk of the provincial army, along with the provincial governor, far away in the wet and cold wilderness of what is now north Wales, Boudicca had faced minimal resistance. The provincial towns of Colchester-Camulodunum, London-Londinium and St Albans-Verulamium were quickly overrun, looted and razed to the ground, captured Romans and their sympathizers, regardless of age or sex, hideously abused, and the best part of the one remaining Roman legion that had been left in that part of the province ambushed and destroyed. This was not a case of a few ragged rowdies stirring up a spot of local trouble, not even a bloody minded yet poorly armed rabble intent on robbing what they could lay their hands upon. The negligent governor, Suetonius Paulinus,





The legionary fortress at Colchester-Camulodunum, established a year or so after the invasion, was 20ha (49 acres) in area and was probably garrisoned by *legio* XX. In these early years of Roman occupation, it served as the centre of the new regime. These decapitated skulls, evidence of Britons once executed by soldiers of the garrison, were unearthed from a ditch of the fortress. Their freshly severed heads were likely impaled on stakes, grisly remains intended to act more as deterrent than trophy. (© Colchester Archaeological Trust)

narrowly avoided the total loss of the fledgling province, and the capricious emperor, Nero, even contemplated abandoning Britannia altogether, either during the course of the rebellion itself or in the uncertain climate of its aftermath. Either way, though the client kingdoms of Cogidubnus and Cartimandua had remained loyal, during this *annus horribilis* the cause of Rome had looked desperate indeed.

The course of the rebellion has been often told, yet the horror of the events does not pale. In true Roman style Tacitus builds up the tension with prodigies and portents, precursors that seemed to favour the Britons. The statue of Victory fell flat on its face as if in flight. Women had hysterics. Outlandish yells and bestial howls were heard. Visions of death and destruction seen. We know what ordinary men are – superstitious and gullible. More interesting to the modern reader is the mention of an effective ‘fifth column’ within Colchester-Camulodunum, perhaps native residents, who successfully flummoxed the Roman incomers and prevented any serious defensive measures against the gathering storm. Having undermined the efforts of the defenders, it is as if Colchester-Camulodunum was buried in a profound sleep.

COLCHESTER-CAMULODUNUM

Six decapitated human skulls were found in one of the ditches of the legionary fortress at Colchester-Camulodunum. They exhibit signs of a violent death. One had a deep gash from a sword blow to the neck; another had a fracture caused by a sword pommel. These are the remains of local Trinovantian Britons beheaded by soldiers of *legio* XX, the sole garrison of the fortress until it was abandoned in or around AD 49. Their heads were presumably impaled on stakes outside the fortress as a warning to others, much like those Dacian heads depicted on Trajan’s Column (Scene lvi).

The fortress lost its garrison when Ostorius Scapula gave *legio* XX its marching orders to head west and fight the Silures, warlike hill folk who inhabited what is now the valley of the Usk and the Black Mountains.

Colchester-Camulodunum was then granted the status of *colonia*, a settlement of newly retired legionaries. These aged veterans undoubtedly were drawn from one or more of the four legions then serving in Britannia. Clearly the spirit of the fledgling *colonia* was military, and it was intended to be the capital of the new province. Yet if the establishment of this colony was to provide a bright shining example of the rule of Roman law for the ‘uncivilized’ locals to follow, as Tacitus (*Annales* 12.32.4) seems to imply, then it calamitously miscarried.

Generally the establishment of *coloniae* was a tried-and-tested method of tightening Roman control on recently conquered territories. They also served as valuable vehicles of ‘romanization’, whereby brutal conquest was followed with the introduction of Mediterranean pleasures in the territory in which they were planted. That, along with making satisfactory provision for pensioned-off legionaries and providing new recruits for the next generation, was the main function of the *coloniae*. Indeed, the deliberate foundation of *coloniae* avoided the unrest that had plagued Rome a century earlier during its civil wars. Besides, old soldiers were better off in *coloniae* on the empire’s rough edge where they could rub shoulders with old army buddies and bore each other with interminable war stories. Roman veteran colonies of about 3,000 men, wives and children added, kept the *esprit de corps* of the legions, and were happier for that. As military colonists, the citizens of Colchester-Camulodunum could be relied upon to promote and protect Rome’s interests against any local opposition. Events were to prove otherwise.

Each veteran of a *colonia* was given a grant of land, usually in the order of 50 *iugera* (12.59ha). If we follow Sealey and assume that at Colchester-Camulodunum there were some 3,000 veterans, then the indigenous population suddenly found themselves short of some 37,750ha, ‘an area equivalent to a circle around the town with a radius of 9 kilometres’ (2000: 16). As Tacitus points out, ‘the settlers drove the Trinovantes from their homes and land, and called them prisoners and slaves’ (*Annales* 14.31.3). The normal Roman custom



Colchester Castle stands foursquare upon the remains of the lofty podium of the massive temple of Claudius. Completed by around 1100, the Norman builders also took tiles and stone from this and the ruins of other Roman buildings in the town. Though now only two storeys high, the keep was once even bigger than its London counterpart, the Tower. (George Gastin)







BOUDICCA SPEAKS TO HER PEOPLE (pp. 48–49)

And then Boudicca (1) came out of the shadows to add the final touch. The familiar voice of their queen rolled out across the field, and the Iceni sprang to their feet to listen. We really do not know what she looked like. Cassius Dio describes (62.2.4) her as very tall, with hiplength yellow hair (he uses the Greek formed from the adjective *xanthotis*, 'yellowness'), piercing eyes and a harsh voice – a picture that may owe more to the stereotype of the northern barbarian than the queen's actual appearance. He also says she habitually wore a multicoloured dress, a gold torque, and a thick cloak pinned in place with a brooch. Boudicca, unlike Joan of Arc, apparently did not feel the need to become a 'cross-dresser'.

In their ethnographic observations of the Celts (2) it seems our Graeco-Roman authors invariably mention three articles of clothing, namely long breeches (*bracae*), long-sleeved, thigh-length tunics (*tunicae*) and heavyweight or lightweight woollen cloaks (*saga*). Diodoros, when describing the Gauls, says (5.30.1) their apparel was conspicuous because of the material having been dyed and embroidered in varied hues. This is confirmed by items of clothing recovered from Celtic burials and Iron Age bog-bodies. Clothes were made of wool or linen (flax), brightly coloured and set with checked or tweed-like designs but, owing to the use of vegetable dyes, much of the colour would have become subdued fairly quickly.

We have a woollen cloth fragment from Falkirk, which is woven into a simple check pattern. Other archaeological finds have also shown the presence of white and coloured sheep's wool in cloth that had not been dyed. One sample of white cloth from Hallstatt

has woven into it a rectangular pattern of bands of black or dark brown wool. The use of black wool is attested by Tacitus' description of those damsels of death who stood with the Druids on the southern shore of Anglesey-Mona dressed 'in robes of deathly black' (*Annales* 14.30.1). The finds from peatbogs also demonstrate that the check pattern did not always depend on contrasting dyed or natural yarns, but sometimes on yarns with contrasted spin directions instead – the subtle 'shadow checks'.

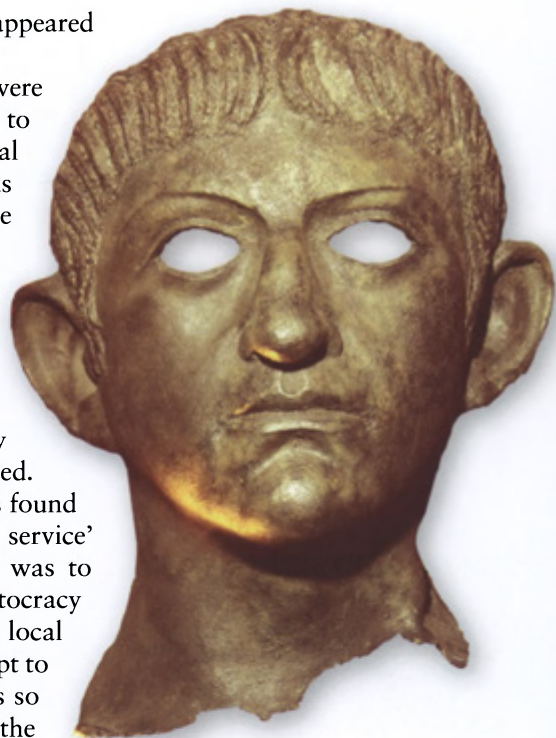
Anyway, Cassius Dio also tells us that Boudicca delivered her speech on 'a tribunal that had been constructed of earth in the Roman fashion' (62.2.3) (3). Obviously, like all people interested in the trappings of power, Boudicca understood the importance of symbols. Retaining her proud and arrogant bearing and dressed with barbaric splendour, our fire-eyed warrior queen raises a great voice and roars out defiance, and threats of bloodcurdling butchery to be performed upon all Romans and their confederates. Fuelled by ire, frustration, and humiliation, she has become rampant, aggressive, unfearing, and, if you will, intolerant, for wrath so great can wipe out sense, morality, principles, decency. She proclaims her sentiments boldly, using adjectives freely to express her contempt for Rome and those who had just perpetrated such an outrage upon the rights of a free people. To Rome, Boudicca confirms its worse fears; this is what the British rebels really want, an insurrection, with unlimited bloodshed and pillage, from one end of the province to the other. Women did not participate in the affairs of men, but she was a living font of power, not a pretty bauble.

of awarding land grants to time-expired soldiers must have appeared little better than daylight robbery to the misfortunate locals.

And another thing. A special priesthood, whose members were the *Augustales*, was created to minister (and pay for) a cult to the deified emperors. Although the significance of the imperial cult is much disputed, the worship of the emperor himself was immensely important not only to impress the 'natives' with the majesty of Rome, but also to act as a focus for loyalty. However, as a matter of particular pertinence here, our sources indicate that the Trinovantian elite had been obliged to take out sizeable loans and invest in the development of the imperial cult at the huge temple of Claudius in Colchester-Camulodunum, the scene of Claudius' *durbar*. The recall of such loans, as we well know, was a contributory factor of the rebellion, which the Trinovantes immediately joined. Tacitus tells us that 'those who had been chosen as its priests found themselves obliged to pour out their whole fortunes in its service' (*Annales* 14.31.4). A prime purpose of the imperial cult was to encourage the development of a loyal, romanized local aristocracy onto whom the responsibilities and burdens of running the local administration could eventually be shifted. It seems the attempt to integrate the Trinovantian elite into the Roman regime was so badly bungled in Colchester-Camulodunum as to have the opposite effect. Coupled with the brutal behaviour of the colonists towards them and the appropriation of their lands, the Trinovantes, rich and poor alike, were more than ready for an insurrection.

The detested *colonia*, with its monstrous temple and its hated ex-soldiers, would be the first target of the British rebels. Evidently the colonists eventually got wind of the coming storm. They appealed to Catus Decianus, who was in London-Londinium, for assistance. The procurator sent them a paltry 200-odd poorly equipped men and then left the darkening stage. Tacitus makes the interesting point that though the *colonia* was well equipped with public buildings – a senate house, theatre, and 'the temple erected to the divine Claudius' (*Annales* 14.31.3) – it was not protected by walls, and archaeology confirms that the defences of the abandoned legionary fortress had been levelled and shovelled into its ditches when its garrison departed. A decade or so later, as the *colonia* grew in, around and over the decommissioned fortress, these ditches would have not only contained backfill, but rubbish and undergrowth too. The only defensible location would have been the precinct of the temple of Claudius.

In the meantime, a *vexillatio* of *legio VIII Hispana*, under the command of Petilius Cerialis, quickly marched south to the rescue, but it was ambushed and destroyed (Tacitus *Annales* 14.32.2). Those legionaries who were unlucky to have been cut down in what seems a carefully planned ambush probably numbered around 2,000, which is the number Tacitus (*Annales* 14.38.1) later tells us were needed to bring the legion back to full strength. The impetuous legate got away with whatever cavalry survived, probably to the fortress at Longthorpe on the Nene near Peterborough. Excavations there have revealed that he got his much-reduced legion to hastily throw up a smaller fort ('Longthorpe II') within the original fortress. Petilius Cerialis, no doubt thinking his military career was over, sat tight with his command and awaited events.



Bronze head from a life-size equestrian statue of Claudius (London, British Museum, inv. P&EE 1965 12-1 1), found (1907) in the bed of the Alde at Rendham, near Saxmundham in Suffolk. A jagged line around the neck showed where it had been violently hacked from the torso. It is believed to have been looted from Colchester-Camulodunum during its sack by Boudicca. Like the *tête coupee*, it may have been deposited in the Alde as a votive offering, one of the rivers that may have delineated Icenian territory. (Ancient Art & Architecture)







DESTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE (pp. 52–53)

To her people Boudicca probably said she wanted the Romans to feel that this was a real war. Such a statement would not be surprising to those who knew this queen from the land of the Iceni and who knew of her ordeal with the Romans. Such a woman as Boudicca was one who hated Romans because they were the ones who had forced her and her people into a condition of barbarous and bloody warfare.

A focus of hatred among the Britons would have been the *colonia* at Colchester-Camulodunum, the veterans there habitually mistreating the Trinovantian locals. The temple of Claudius also attracted unwonted anger, because it was seen as a symbol of oppression and abuse, the 'blatant stronghold of alien rule', as Tacitus (*Annales* 14.31.3) was to call it. As the temple was dedicated to the deified Claudius it could not have been built before his death in AD 54 (Fishwick 1972: 164). The actual phrasing used by Tacitus, *templum divo Claudio constitutum*, must mean that the temple had not been consecrated, but only decreed by the Senate. Yet some sort of edifice was standing in the year of the rebellion since the veterans used its massive walls for their last stand. So it seems reasonable to speculate that it was under construction (1). Nonetheless, it would have been an imposing creation, even

half completed. By itself the extant temple podium is impressive, measuring as it does some 32 by 24.4m, and its width would have allowed for a colonnade with eight columns, rising to a height of 9m. It would have stood in a walled precinct 160 by 180m. It was here that the veterans of Colchester-Camulodunum were to hold out for two days.

We see here the state of affairs at the close of the second day. As the flames lick the evening sky the black smoke mixes and blends with the red glow of sunset and fire. After two days decaying human and animal flesh would have caused a stench that would reach those in the temple, huddled together like sheep frightened by a wolf. The hungry fire could not purify the *colonia*, and the foul odour of rotting offal and burning flesh was a constant reminder to the refugees in the temple of the extent of the destruction of their homes and the desecration of their places of work and recreation. In the beleaguered temple itself, poor sanitation causes foul smells, and swarms of flies. The intensifying heat is beginning to asphyxiate, and the proud but pitiful defence (2) is about to be bludgeoned into the ground by a seething mass of warriors. The Britons (3) pour into the precinct, no pity in them for the pathetic opposition, only anger that the veterans had lasted so long.

At Colchester-Camulodunum the rebels destroyed the *colonia* in the first rush, and in the second wiped out the defenders after a two-day siege of the barricaded temple. The destruction of the detested *colonia* was total: it was burnt to the ground and the population, regardless of age or sex, wiped out by means of crucifixion, hanging, fire and the blade. The layer of scorched debris created by the sack has been labelled the ‘Boudiccan destruction horizon’ by the archaeologists; a reddish-brown ash consisting mainly of incinerated wattle-and-daub peppered with molten glass, broken tile and blackened pottery. It is the only physical evidence of the savage rebellion, though an earlier military cemetery just west of the *colonia*, with the graves lining the main route to London-Londinium, was also vandalized.

LONDON-LONDINIUM

London-Londinium was a new town, a Roman creation founded not long after the conquest, but it had grown to a thriving entrepôt with a population of travellers, traders and, undoubtedly, Roman functionaries (Tacitus *Annales* 14.33.1). Whereas Colchester-Camulodunum was a focus for imperial prestige, this embryonic town was on its way to becoming what it is now, a city of consumers, of people who are profoundly civilized but not primarily useful.

Archaeology tells us that the nucleus of the first settlement lay east of the Walbrook stream, on the hummock at Cornhill where the road from the Thames crossing (just upstream of Old London Bridge, the Medieval crossing point) met two main roads – that to St Albans-Verulamium (to the north-west), and that to Colchester-Camulodunum (to the north-east). Just north of this T-junction was the first forum, a small gravelled open space, now roughly the area of Leadenhall Market. When all is said and done London-Londinium is something of a special case. In all probability founded as a supply port – the settlement also lay at the tidal head of the Thames at that time – the town had a rectilinear planned street grid, with amenities such as piped water. It was never a *civitas* capital, but would become capital of the province and formal centre of its administration. Exactly when this occurred is uncertain, but the next procurator was to be buried there (*RIB* 12).

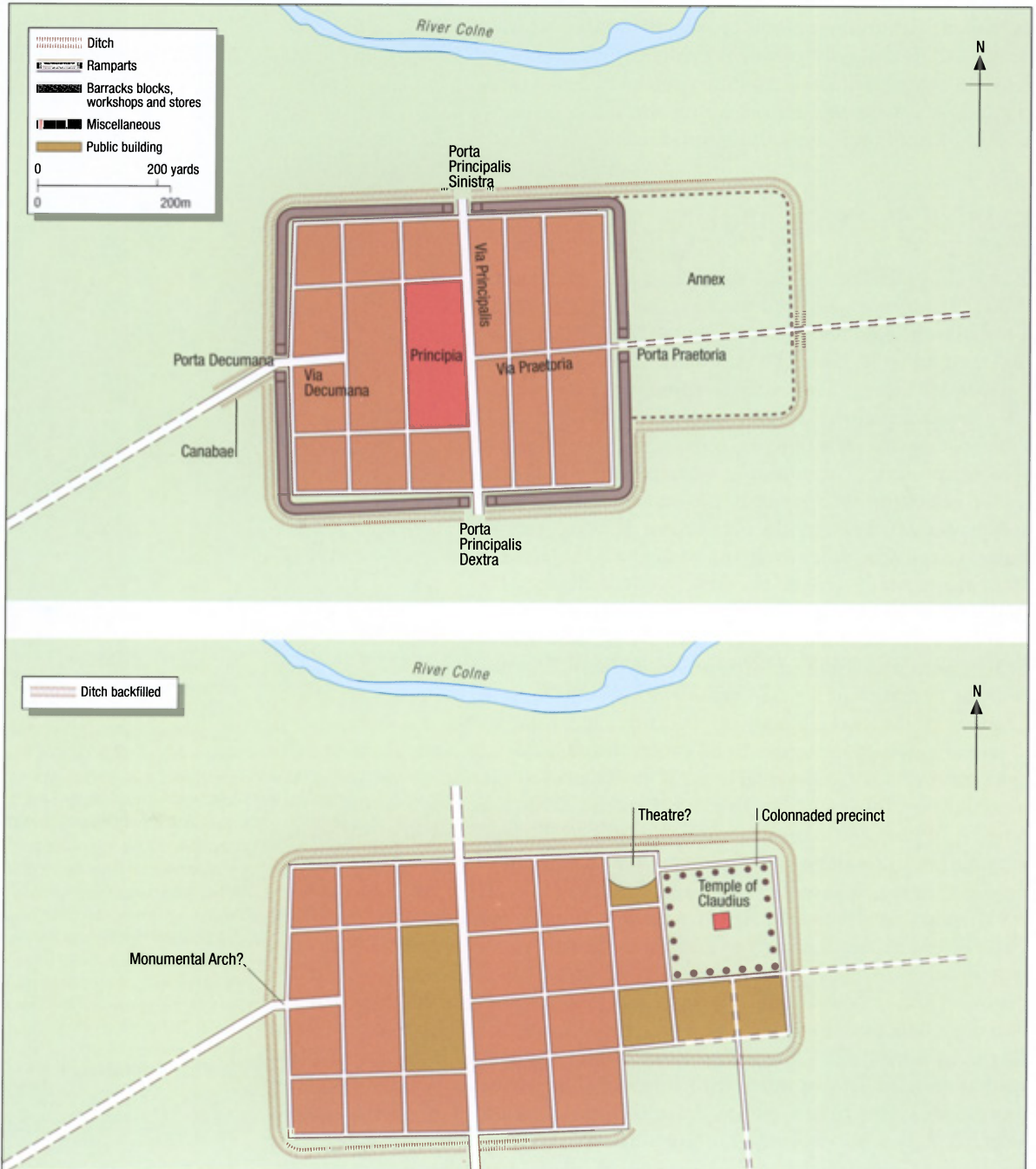
Having said all that, the first city came to a sudden and dramatic end; as at Colchester-Camulodunum, the death and destruction at London-Londinium was absolute. Likewise, archaeologists have identified a ‘Boudiccan destruction horizon’, and once again the incinerated debris was architectural in character; like the *colonia* before it, the town had been thoroughly looted by the rebels. Be this as it may, one thing archaeology cannot conjure up is the sheer horror of that ending. Tacitus deals with this with his usual economy of evocative words: ‘it was the sword, gibbet, fire and cross’ (*Annales* 14.33.6). It is Cassius Dio (62.7.2) who provides the gory details, no doubt to tickle his male readership. The women had their breasts cut off and stuffed into their mouths,



Tombstone of Marcus Favonius Facilis (Colchester, Colchester Castle Museum), broken into two and overturned by the rebels as they destroyed Colchester-Camulodunum. The inscription (*RIB* 200) tells us he was a *centurio* of *legio XX*. His body armour is certainly mail, complete with shoulder doubling and *pteruges*, and, as invariably seen on other centurions' tombstones, the *gladius* is worn on the left, not the right as for legionaries. He wears greaves and carries the notorious gnarled vine-stick, *vitis*, his badge of office. (Fields-Carre Collection)

and stakes were thrust lengthwise through their bodies. What bestialities were performed upon the men are left untold. Anyway, it was probably at this stage that whatever military plan Boudicca may have had at the outset of her rebellion vanished in this latest tide of butchery and booty. The bloody events at London-Londinium must have tipped the balance against Boudicca's interests, her followers now fired by thoughts of Roman gold, a life of ease. It was now only a matter of greed and lust.

Colchester-Camulodunum



ST ALBANS-VERULAMIUM

Having dealt with London-Londinium and its denizens, Boudicca and her war host straggled north along what was to be known much later as Watling Street (Old English *Wæcelinga Stræt*), now known as the A2 and A5 trunk roads, the major Roman route that stretched from Dover-Portus Dubris to Wroxeter-Viriconium (Margary 1a to 1h) via a ford of the Thames – perhaps the river crossing of the invasion army – at present-day Westminster Bridge. Boudicca's next victim was to be St Albans-Verulamium. Like the other two, it had no permanent defences at the time.

Pre-Roman St Albans-Verulamium was known as Verlamion, after the spelling of the place found on coins of Tasciovanus (r. c.15 BC to c. AD 10), the son or grandson of the celebrated Cassivellaunos, and had served as the capital of the Catuvellauni. With the arrival of Rome, once an area was deemed to be sufficiently pacified, a tribal area was handed over to local administration. In general the Romans preferred to adapt the already existing politico-social system rather than create something entirely new, a sensible matter of 'if it isn't broke, don't fix it'. Hence the administrative areas, *civitates*, in Britannia were loosely based on pre-Roman tribal territories. Naturally each *civitas* required an administrative centre and, accordingly, Mediterranean-style towns were deliberately founded, *civitas* capitals, on sites of pre-existing tribal capitals or newly formed settlements outside Roman military installations. St Albans-Verulamium belonged to the former category.

The Roman town was small, extending only over 8ha, a size comparable with other contemporary towns. At St Albans the 'Boudiccan destruction horizon' consists of the same architectural detritus and ash found at Colchester and London. However, it differs in the absence of any caches of coins or carbonized cereal deposits, so it has been postulated that the inhabitants, having expected the worse, had time to remove themselves and their portable wealth to places of safety before the rebels arrived. Nonetheless, it too, once teeming with provincial life, was at this time a blackened desolation haunted by hungry dogs. Boudicca left the wasted town of St Albans-Verulamium at the height of her power and success.

Tacitus estimated deaths at the three provincial towns at 70,000, both 'Roman citizens and other friends of Rome' (*Annales* 14.33.4), but in view of the relatively small size of the places involved, the figure seems rather exaggerated. Moreover, apart from old crones and withered men, those no one had any use for or who were too crippled to walk, a great many of the populace probably fled before death and destruction was brought down upon them. Cassius Dio offers a similar figure but more drama. Having just related a rather bizarre tale about Nero's prizewinning lyre playing, he writes: 'While this sort of child's play was going on at Rome, a terrible disaster occurred in Britannia. Two cities were sacked, 80,000 of the Romans and their allies perished, and the island was lost to Rome' (62.1.1). Anyone who chooses may quarrel with these figures. Nobody will ever get an exact body count, because the records are just not available – not as a modern historian understands the expression. The claims of our two ancient authors are obviously somewhat overstated, yet they are not too far from the truth nonetheless. According to a third, Suetonius (*Nero* 18, cf. 39.1), the crisis had almost persuaded the emperor to abandon his province as not being worth a fig. Had Boudicca won, the hated Romans would have been driven out of Britannia.

Tombstone of Longinus Sdapeze (Colchester, Colchester Castle Museum), which was smashed into six main pieces by the rebels and dumped face down. The inscription (*RIB* 201) tells us he was a Thracian from Sardica (Sofia, Bulgaria), hence the neat conjunction of both native and Roman name, and serving as a *duplicarius* of *ala I Thracum* when he died, aged 40, after 15 years' service – an older recruit than was usual. His sculptured face was found in 1996 and since restored to its rightful place. (Fields-Carré collection)



ABOVE

Hawkedon helmet (London, British Museum, inv. P&EE 1966 6-5 1), found (1965) in a Suffolk field. This very solid bronze helmet originally had a tinned surface, giving it a lustrous appearance, and once had a hinged mask with eye guards. A gladiator's helmet, it was probably taken by a rebel during the sack of nearby Colchester-Camulodunum, who, finding it too heavy and cumbersome, dumped it. (Claire H)

BELOW

Reconstruction of wattle-and-daub wall construction (Cirencester, Corinium Museum). An ancient walling technique, this involved twigs and withies woven around posts driven into the ground and daubed with compacted clay (*pise*) to make them weatherproof. The surface was then rendered and plastered. Most of the Boudiccan destruction horizon is burnt daub. Normally daub does not survive as it reverts to its original clay. High temperatures, however, transformed it into a more durable, ceramic-like substance. (Fields-Carré Collection)



ANGLESEY-MONA

Before continuing with our story, we must backtrack a moment and look to events in the far west. North Wales was poor, wild, mountainous and thinly settled. It was a bad place for a fight. The tracks were few, narrow and bad, and the settlement clearings were scarce. Most of the country was densely wooded, with undergrowth so thick and thorny that it prevented anyone under the most favourable circumstances from seeing more than 50m in any direction, cut up by rough ravines and deep watercourses, with bramble and bracken that in places became an almost impenetrable tangle. But in Anglesey-Mona everything was very different. This was a fair island beyond wildest Wales, its legacy of magic stretching back to the Stone Age. It was also the heart of Druidism.

Druids revered natural spirits, including trees, and believed in rebirth. They were an intellectual elite, dedicated to philosophic enquiry and the pursuit of nature's secrets. They were also society's arbiters and appeasers, guardians of tribal traditions and administrators of tribal law, gurus who saw their role as expert witnesses or objective, disinterested observers. To be brief, the Druids appear to have been the caretakers of whatever knowledge – from sorcery to science – their people possessed (Diodoros 5.31.2, 4–5, Caesar *Bellum Gallicum* 6.13–14, Strabo 4.4.4–5, Ammianus Marcellinus 15.9.4–8). They also practised human sacrifice. Because of this (for the record), and because



TOP

The White Tower, Tower of London, the stark squat fortress first raised by William the Conqueror (r. 1066–87). A century or so later, the Coeur de Lion (r. 1189–99) enclosed this impressive tower of stone with a moat and curtain wall, utilizing parts of the old Roman city wall to the east in the circuit. However, at the time of Boudicca's unforeseen visit, London-Londinium had no walls. (Ancient Art & Architecture)



BOTTOM

Marble Arch, with the southern terminus of the Edgware Road just beyond, which forms part of the route of Watling Street through London. To the casual pedestrian trundling by, this London high street might not seem like a particularly noteworthy spot. But aficionados of Roman Britain know that this was once the road by which Boudicca and her blood-bloated, loot-laden host exited London-Londinium headed for St Albans-Verulamium. (Alexandre Mallet)







AMBUSHING OF THE DETACHMENT (pp. 60–61)

A military nation and a warlike nation are not necessarily the same. The Romans were warlike from organization and instinct, and many of their accounts of the Celts fit the conventional characterization of barbarians as ignorant, argumentative, stupid and volatile. They lie, break their oaths, and are unpleasant, and, worse still, in war they prefer ambush and long-distance fighting to good, old honest hand-to-hand combat for which Rome's disciplined soldiers were specially trained and equipped.

For the Briton who had some experience of the invader's battle tactics, where the enormous weight and power of the armoured legionaries carved their wide paths through the packed mass of unarmoured tribesmen, the standing fight was not the route to success. A different kind of war was preferable, where tribesmen could suddenly emerge from their native forests and bogs and fall upon isolated units of Romans, and by sheer surprise and strength do brisk butchery before flying as fast as they had fallen. To beat the invaders without a major battle, if we understand battle to mean a full-scale confrontation between armies, was the locals' trump card.

Emerging from the thickly wooded place, the Britons have attacked the Romans with cavalry and chariots (1). This is a different kind of warfare for the legionaries, who have been caught completely off guard. The Britons darted in amongst the *vexillatio* (2), hurling their javelins, then leapt down from their horses and from their chariots. The warriors are now fighting on foot, doing grim work with their long swords, hacking and hewing in howling frenzy. Meantime, the horse handlers and the charioteers (3) have sedately stationed themselves as close as possible so that if the fight went against them the fighters could disengage, rush to the chariots and horses and escape. Yet the Britons know the terrain, and their weapons and individual fighting skills are much better suited to it than are those of the Romans. Petilius Cerialis quickly realized he had been caught in a deadly trap.



Rome saw Druids as a focus of resistance and rebellion (off the record), Druidism had been curbed by imperial decree since the days of Tiberius, and then outlawed altogether by Claudius (Pliny *Historia Naturalis* 30.4.13, Suetonius *Claudius* 25.5). There was no alternative lifestyle in the empire, as Tacitus underlines when he adamantly scoffs at ‘the idle superstition of Druidism’ (*Historiae* 4.54).

In this use of the Druids, Tacitus has imitated the Greek dramatist who brought down a god from the clouds to assist in the catastrophe of his tragedies. There is a popular weakness for thinking of Druids in the most simplistic, comic-book terms. Popular notions of white-robed Druids overseeing human sacrifice, cutting mistletoe with golden sickles and chanting spells over boiling magic cauldrons persist – and not without reason. Valuable as they are, the Graeco-Roman sources, at best second hand and slanted, should not be accepted at face value. The Druids were neither great moral sages nor human-sacrificing savages.

Before we continue any further, we should take a quick look at Anglesey-Mona itself. The considerable Roman interest in the island has been explained with reference to the Druids, who have been seen as orchestrating the British opposition to Rome (e.g. Webster 1999: 86–89). Yet for this there is little concrete evidence. According to Caesar (*Bellum Gallicum* 6.13) the Druids came to Britannia for training, and Tacitus (*Annales* 14.30) of course has them ensconced on the island. However, we should note that this is Tacitus’ only reference to them in the whole of his extant writings on Britannia (Todd 1981: 255–56).

So there may be more to it than a simple matter of fanatical Druids, and indeed a major political role for these shadowy spiritual figures is now less popular. More prosaic factors may have influenced Roman interest in the island. For one, Anglesey-Mona, with one of the largest fertile areas and some

Remains of the northern circuit of St Albans-Verulamium, with the abbey in the distance. Before the Romans, the late Iron Age settlement was known as Verlamion (‘settlement by the marsh’), the tribal seat (Latin *civitas*) of the Catuvellauni. By the time of the rebellion (if we take Tacitus at face value) it had been granted the rank of *municipium*, viz. a self-governing community with *ius Latini*, Latin rights. The town walls belong to the 3rd century AD. (Gary Houston)

Suetonius Paulinus in Wales, AD 58–60



of the most favourable climate conditions in north Wales, may rightly be regarded as the local breadbasket, and thus a key to control of the area. Secondly, it contained mineral resources, notably copper, the exploitation of which is more often a factor influencing Roman strategy than is usually admitted – tin and copper smelted together to make a third element, finer, stronger more beautiful than either, burnished bronze with which to make helmets. Radiocarbon dating has confirmed the mining of copper on the island as early c.2000–1700 BC. In addition, as mentioned previously, Tacitus claims (*Annales* 14.29.3) that Suetonius Paulinus had ambitions for spectacular conquests on the ragged and dangerous frontiers of the empire, being driven, as he was, by jealousy of the foremost of his contemporaries, Domitius Corbulo. Thus Suetonius Paulinus was presented with another, albeit very personal, reason for launching this arduous attack upon Anglesey-Mona.

Let us get back to the governor. Suetonius Paulinus had spent two, gruelling years on the reduction of north Wales, finally isolating Anglesey-Mona, where, in grim sacred groves, ‘altars were drenched with human blood and entrails’ (Tacitus *Annales* 14.30.3). His force consisted of two legions, *XIII Gemina* and XX, and supporting auxiliaries of unknown numbers, though we may guess the infantry contingent included some *cohortes* of Batavi – as mentioned before, in Britannia eight *cohortes* of Batavi were attached to *legio XIII Gemina*, and were to depart with it in AD 67 as part of Nero’s planned expedition to the Caucasus, which never materialized (Tacitus *Historiae* 1.6.4, 59.1, 66.2, 2.27.2, 4.12.3, 15.1). We may guess too that the cavalry contingent included the *ala* of Batavi, ‘a picked cavalry force specially trained for amphibious operations’ (Tacitus *Historiae* 4.12.4). In his version of events that followed, Tacitus tells us that the governor ferried the infantry ‘across the treacherous shallows’ in flat-bottomed boats, while the cavalry used fords, ‘some troopers swimming beside their mounts’ (*Annales* 14.29.4). Presumably the Romans crossed during the slack tide. At its narrowest point, the Menai Strait, as it is now called, is about 400m wide. However, it is flushed by a strong tidal flow and peppered with quicksands and whirlpools.

Menai Strait, Anglesey, as viewed from west of the Britannia Bridge and the Nelson Memorial. The strait varies in width from 400m to 1,100m (south-western end), narrowing to about 500m in its middle reaches and then broadens again to 900m (north-eastern end). The differential tides at its two ends cause strong currents to flow in both directions through the strait at different times, creating treacherous conditions. All in all, a hazardous crossing at the best of times without a bridge. (Andrew Dixon)



The defenders resorted to magic to frighten and weaken the barbarous invaders. Wild women – ‘in robes of deathly black and with dishevelled hair’ – madly danced, screaming and cursing, through the ranks of gathered warriors and brandished flaming firebrands to warm their fierce menfolk to the searing heat of battle. There too were the Druids, raising their arms skyward and calling down hideous hexes upon the heads of the Romans. Tacitus continues, saying that many of the Romans stood watching fearfully, ‘their limbs trembling in terror’ (*Annales* 14.30.1). Legionaries were every bit as superstitious as their Celtic enemies, and even the hard-bitten veterans among them must have looked both at the occupied beach opposite and the swirling surf they must cross and debated their chances of success. There comes always a moment, whether of fright, fury, confidence warranted or mistaken, when the first move is made, the definitive one. It was at this moment that Suetonius Paulinus rode amongst them, chiding them for their unfounded fears and reminding them of their duty as soldiers of Rome. The tautness released, the legionaries fought their way ashore. The opposition was wiped out, either cut down by the sword or engulfed in the flames of their own torches, and there followed a deliberate policy of suppression and destruction. The sacred groves were hacked down, and in doing so, a way of life was destroyed.

But Britannia was reluctant to yield her laurels, instead she offered rebellion. The slaughter was hardly over when a fast courier bearing news of the destruction of Colchester-Camulodunum reached the governor. Modern estimates reckon that imperial dispatch riders probably averaged about 50 Roman miles (c.75km) a day on routine journeys, as opposed to the 20 Roman miles of the legions at a steady slog on good roads. Because of the necessity to construct marching camps before nightfall, and they never encamped for the night without such temporary security around them, legions on campaign tended not to move with great celerity. As the governor’s competitor in the glory game, Domitius Corbulo, is reported to have said, ‘the entrenching tool (*dolabra*) was the weapon with which to beat the enemy’ (Frontinus *Strategemata* 4.7.2). As well as making and striking camp, there were the additional chores of unpacking and packing kit, foddering and bedding animals, cooking one’s own meal, and so on and so forth. Anyway, for the governor’s men, London-Londinium was some 250 Roman miles away.

Low-cut relief decorating a column base from the *principia* of Mainz-Mogontiacum showing a legionary in marching order and an *optio* (Mainz, Mittelrheinisches Landesmuseum). To help run his century, a *centurio* was assisted by a second in command, an *optio*, so named because under the Republic *centuriones* ‘adopted’ their own *optiones* (*adoptandum*, Varro *de lingua Latina* 5.91, Festus 201.23). Here we clearly see the ‘badge of office’ of an *optio*, a stout staff (*hastile*), which was extremely useful in forcing the men back into line, the *optio* traditionally standing at the rear of his century. (Fields-Carre Collection)



THE BATTLE

Breaking off his Anglesey-Mona campaign, Suetonius Paulinus hastened south-east with a small mounted escort. Both Tacitus (*Annales* 14.33.1) and Cassius Dio (62.8.1) say that he moved fast. He managed to reach London-Londinium in safety, and initially he considered the possibility of saving the town, which meant he had not ordered his army to concentrate elsewhere at the time. However, after due consideration, Suetonius Paulinus decided, in the terse words of Tacitus (*Annales* 14.33.2), to save the province by abandoning London-Londinium to its fate – his assessment of the situation turned out to be canny albeit callous – and, as Boudicca’s forces snowballed south-westwards, he and his escort clattered north-westwards to rejoin the army on its long march down Watling Street.



Tacitus set little value upon topography as an aid to understanding military events, yet he is uncommonly precise about the terrain on which the battle with the Britons was fought, saying that Suetonius Paulinus picked a spot surrounded by wooded slopes, with a narrow entrance that was protected in the rear by a primitive forest, dense with undergrowth. Thus firmly positioned, the governor had no fear of being suddenly attacked from the flanks or the rear. The Britons, he knew, could approach from the front.

Despite these details, however, and they almost certainly came from an eyewitness account of Agricola, then serving under Suetonius Paulinus as a tribune (*Agricola* 5.1), Tacitus gives no clues about the actual whereabouts of this the battleground he has described so well. No doubt faithfully preserving the information of his beloved father-in-law, unfortunately for us he has pruned it to the point of obscurity. Even if we appeal to witnesses who are still with us, namely river, tracks, gradients, forest, from his account the site is unlocatable. Presumably the governor wanted to entice Boudicca as far west as possible in order to allow time for his footsore men to draw breath, and to muster reinforcements and gather supplies. He would not have advanced too far down Watling Street, especially as he was still expecting to be joined by a *vexillatio* of *legio II Augusta* coming up from the south-west.

Carroll (1979) suggests a site close to High Cross in Leicestershire, on the junction of Watling Street and Fosse Way, which would have allowed that expected *vexillatio* to rendezvous with the rest of the governor's army. Webster (based on the work of Oswald and of Scott) favours Mancetter, a dormitory of Atherstone in Warwickshire, as the most likely place. According to him (1999: 97, 111–12), Tacitus' 'narrow defile' (*Annales* 14.34.2) may have been one of the several tributary valleys of the river Anker, particularly that near White Hall Farm north of the hamlet of Hartshill, the forest protecting the Roman rear having now been reduced to a few patchy woods on the high ground to the south-west of the river (Monks Park Wood and Hartshill Hayes Country Park). The floodplain on which Boudicca's host gathered may have been the farmland between Atterton, Witherley and Fenny Drayton, covering an area of around 5km².

LEFT

Caliga as worn by a re-enactor of *legio XV Apollinaris*. Made of cow or ox leather, each *caliga* was cut out from a one-piece upper, sewn up at the heel and laced all the way up the front. To this was clenched a thin insole and a thick outer sole, the latter finished with conical iron hobnails – evidence from the site of the Varian disaster suggests 120 per boot. With their finely cut straps and weighing a little under 1 kg, *caligae* were light and supple and allowed the soldier's feet to breathe. (Matthias Kabel)

RIGHT

Re-enactor of *legio XV Apollinaris* holding a replica *spatha*. This was a long, narrow double-edged broadsword. The middle section of the blade was virtually parallel-edged, but tapered into a rounded point. It was intended primarily as a slashing weapon for use on horseback, the use of the whole arm allowing more force to be put into the downward blow, though the point could also be used. In our period, the *spatha* was still worn on the right side of the body, as numerous cavalry tombstones show, suspended from a waist belt or baldric whose length could be adjusted by a row of metal buttons. (Matthias Kabel)

Re-enactor of *legio XV Apollinaris* posing as an *aquilifer*. The eagle standard (*aquila*) was carried into battle by a senior standard-bearer, the *aquilifer*, second only to a centurion in rank. It was under the personal care of the *primus pilus*. While its safe custody was equivalent to the continuance of the legion as a fighting unit, however depleted in numbers, its loss brought the greatest ignominy on any survivors and could result in the disbandment of the legion in disgrace. (Matthias Kabel)



The case for Mancetter does seem reasonable at face value. Its name, after all, means ‘place of the chariots’, Manduessedum. On a rocky outcrop overlooking a crossing point of the river Anker and strung along Watling Street, was a rural settlement. In our period the settlement was without defensive walls. Much later on, though agriculture was clearly still of great importance to the economy of the settlement, its main preoccupation was to be pottery making, production and distribution on a truly industrial scale probably having been established or promoted by the Roman Army to help furnish its own substantial needs, especially when it came to *mortaria*, heavy kitchen bowls with a pouring spout, used for pulverizing and mixing food – a method peculiar to the Roman kitchen. A military establishment was

The Boudiccan rebellion



Building slab (Caerleon, National Roman Legion Museum) recording the work by the century of Iulius Gemelli, *cohortis VIII, legio II Augusta*. Levied by Caius Vibius Pansa Caetronianus (cos. 43 BC) as part of his consular series, *legio II* soon found itself fighting for Octavianus in the boy-warlord's merciless clamour for supremacy. Battle honours included Philippi (42 BC) and Perugia (41/40 BC). The legion participated in the invasion of AD 43, its legate being the future emperor Vespasian. However, it would not be at Mancetter. (Fields-Carre Collection)



situated some 800m south-west of the settlement, on the opposite bank of the Anker and facing east-north-east. It is difficult to date its construction at all closely. Samian potsherds dated between AD 45 and 67 were found during the excavation of the ditch infilling, which therefore does not rule out an even later construction date, though this seems unlikely.

Mention of the Anker of course brings us around to a big topographical question mark. If Mancetter is the site of Boudicca's last battle, then the river is a major obstacle running right across the killing ground. Tacitus makes no mention of it. What is more, the only classical mention of Mancetter occurs in the *Antonine Itinerary* (Latin *Itinerarium Provinciarum Antonini Augusti*), a road register attributed to the eccentric Caracalla (Marcus Aurelius Caracalla, r. AD 211–17). It gives lists of the stations and distances along various major roads of the empire, and in the section known as *Iter Britanniarum*, Route II 'the route from the Wall [of Hadrian] to the port of Rutupiae (Richborough)', the entry Manduesedo is listed 16 [Roman] miles from Letocetum (Wall, Staffordshire) and 12 [Roman] miles from Venonis (High Cross, Leicestershire).

Caution must be the order of the day. As of yet, no supporting evidence has been found which positively links Mancetter to the death ground of Boudicca's army. I have assumed that the last battle took place at Mancetter, though it may have easily taken place at any one of a dozen other sites in middle England. The debate continues unabated, and most recently a good case has been made for placing the battlefield in the valley west of Church Stowe, Northamptonshire (Pegg 2010).

At the governor's disposal were *legio XIII Gemina* and a *vexillatio* of *legio XX* (he probably garrisoned Anglesey-Mona), maybe some 7,000 legionaries in total, and those auxiliaries (rarely named or numbered) he already had with him or was able to summon from nearby forts (let us say six *cohortes* and two *alae*), in all a force of some 11,000 men. Here we can make a reasonable guess the auxiliaries included our redoubtable Batavi, for Tacitus says that 'the Batavi cohorts were moved to Britannia where they added to their laurels' (4.12.3), that is to say, either during the invasion of Britannia or the rebellion of Boudicca. Anyway, the governor was deprived of some 3,000 legionaries, if not more, and probably additional auxiliaries too. He had dispatched an urgent message summoning *legio II Augusta* from its garrison base at Exeter-Isca Dumnoniorum, but for some mysterious reason its acting commander, the *praefectus castrorum* Poenius Postumus, failed to respond and didn't come at all. As he was third in the chain of command, it seems that

both the *legatus* and *tribunus laticlavus* were elsewhere at the time, the latter perhaps most significantly being Agricola, who was plausibly on secondment to the governor's official mobile staff, *stratores consulares*.

What Suetonius Paulinus had feared above all was a protracted insurgent war, for the Britons had an edge on the Romans when it came to guerrilla tactics on their own terrain, as witnessed with the destruction of *legio VIII Hispana*. A series of such hit-and-run manoeuvres would have depleted and exhausted the Romans. However, flushed by her earlier victories Boudicca now staked her fate on one battle, or, as the popular poet William Cowper sang, 'Rush'd to battle, fought and died' ('Boadicea' line 39). It is often too easy, with the inevitable luxury of hindsight, to criticize the actions of past commanders but few of us who do have had to take any of the same decisions in similar circumstances. Rationality can often vanish in a trice and certitude is a more likely master than reason when things seem to be going your way. Still, once she had made the commitment to stand and fight her fate was sealed, for the Roman Army was supreme in open battle.

A coherent account of the final battle is impossible, except at the most general level. According to Tacitus (*Annales* 14.34–37), one of two principal recorders of this engagement, Suetonius Paulinus, with a soldier's eye to the situation, skilfully disposed his forces along a defile – *legiones* in the centre with auxiliary *cohortes* alongside and *alae* on either wing – whence he had a full view of the arena to his front, while dense woodland secured his flanks and rear. His fear here was that his army might be outflanked and surrounded

St Peter's Church, Mancetter.
This 13th-century parish church occupies an eminence once the site of a Roman fortress. The fortress measured some 330 by 310m and covered an area of around 10ha, too small for a full-scale legionary fortress, but too large for an auxiliary fort. It was probably established by a *vexillatio* of *legio XIII Gemina*, and was, to use the term first coined by Frere (1967: 71), a vexillation fortress. (Neil Sanders)









FINAL RECKONING (pp. 72–73)

After a season of practising incendiary acts and thoroughly learning the technique of plunder and pillage, it was time to put aside their heinous career of atrocity. The jolly, rollicking days of the rebellion were over. It was time for Boudicca's followers to face battle, and for many it would be their first.

At the first flush of dawn, Boudicca's host rose up from the bare ground, and, snatching bread and water as best they could, fell into loose bands that stretched this way and that, making it impossible for even the Romans above them to see their flanks. One army stood higher up in a chosen position waiting quietly while another army, much superior in numbers, proceeded at leisure to attack it. Let us now see how it was accomplished and how it was resisted.

We see Boudicca standing on her chariot platform (1). Her appearance – which apparently included yellowish hair and eyes of perfect blue – indicated a superb physique and great energy. She is clearly delighted with the evident alacrity, animated faces, and elastic gait with which all move forward into action to bundle the despised enemy from its perch. She eagerly looks towards the Roman line for the first signs of anticipated panic, with absolute confidence in her power

to overcome. Surely the detested aliens could never face her host while the roar of thousands was still fresh in their ears. No matter, the time had come to sweep the governor's small force away (2). Time was running out for the queen herself, however.

Whatever was ornamental in warfare was left to the Britons, and those howling tribesmen streaming towards the Roman line in one barbaric surge must have been ornamental as lime, woad, enamel, glass, silver and gold could make them (3). For us moderns the notion of 'adornment' suggests the superficial, the superfluous, even the frivolous. The concept for our ancient ancestors, however, was rather different. For them, the decorated appearance was more often thought to reveal rather than conceal. Other bodily adornments included personal jewellery, particularly armlets and bracelets commonly worn by all Celts. However, it is the torque that is the attribute par excellence of the Celtic warrior. Extant examples are made of a pliant metallic rod, either plain or twisted, or are tubular in construction. In both cases they are thickened at the ends, with ring or loop terminals for rod torques and buffer terminals for tubular torques, and are fashioned in gold, silver, electrum, iron, or copper alloy according to the status of the wearer.



by Boudicca's great host (though Cassius Dio's figure of 230,000 is surely hyperbole), so he forced a frontal assault on his position, which obviously offered only a short front. This would have prevented Boudicca from bringing her considerable forces to bear on the waiting Romans. The Britons also had to do all the jogging and charging up the sharp slope ahead of them, while the Romans stood silent and fast until the signal to engage. Of course, the woodland to his rear did mean that retreat was out of the question, but under the circumstances there was no alternative. It was simply a case of do or die.

As the two contestants arrayed themselves for the coming contest, the two commanders sought to motivate their respective troops. Boudicca is reputed to have driven her chariot, with her two daughters, through the ranks of her followers, stirring up their virility by telling them to 'win this battle, or perish. That is what I, a woman, plan to do – let the men live in slavery if they will' (Tacitus *Annales* 14.35.3). Boudicca's speech, brief but dramatic, is certainly invented by Tacitus to make a point for his Roman audience, not to display his own rhetorical skill nor to appeal to his dramatic purpose. It is very different from the long-winded braggadocio given to Boudicca earlier by Cassius Dio (62.3–5). The remarks of Suetonius Paulinus, again recorded by our Roman historian, but this time, in all probability, from the recollections of Agricola whom we assume was present that fateful day, were more brisk and businesslike:

Manor House, Mancetter. This timber-framed manor house, the original construction dating from about 1330, is just to the south-west of the parish church dedicated to St Peter. Nearby were found three complete *amphorae* and at least three periods of timber buildings of a military type. These once formed part of the vexillation fortress. Such military establishments in Britannia were a particular feature of the fluid military situation of AD 43–77. (Photograph courtesy of Leo Fields)

Ignore the racket made by these savages. There are more women than men in their ranks. They are not soldiers – they are not even properly equipped. We have beaten them before and when they see our weapons and feel our spirit, they will crack. Stick together. Throw the *pila*, then push forward: knock them down with your shields and finish them off with your swords. Forget about booty. Just win and you will have the lot.

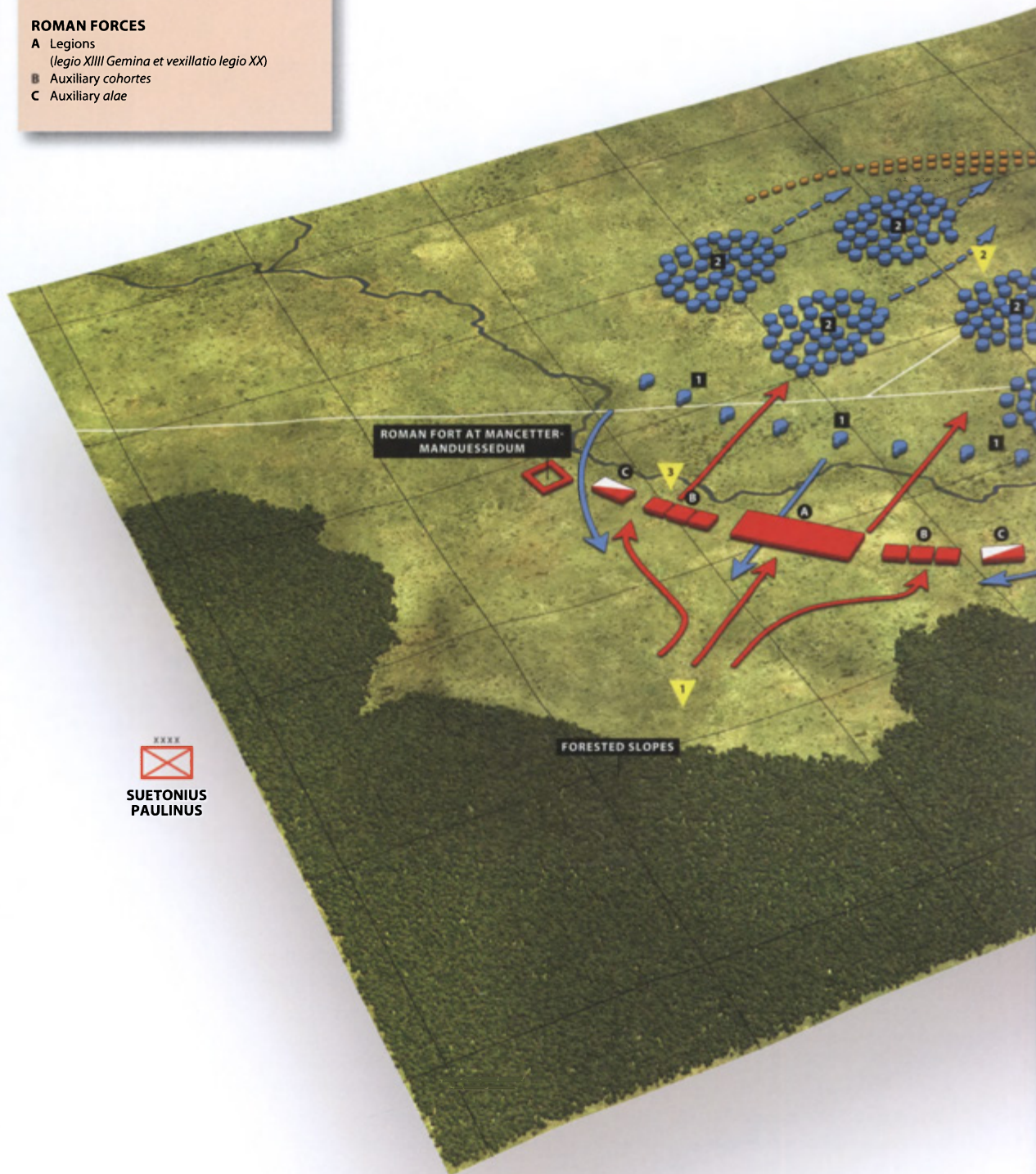
Tacitus *Annales* 14.36.3

BRITISH FORCES

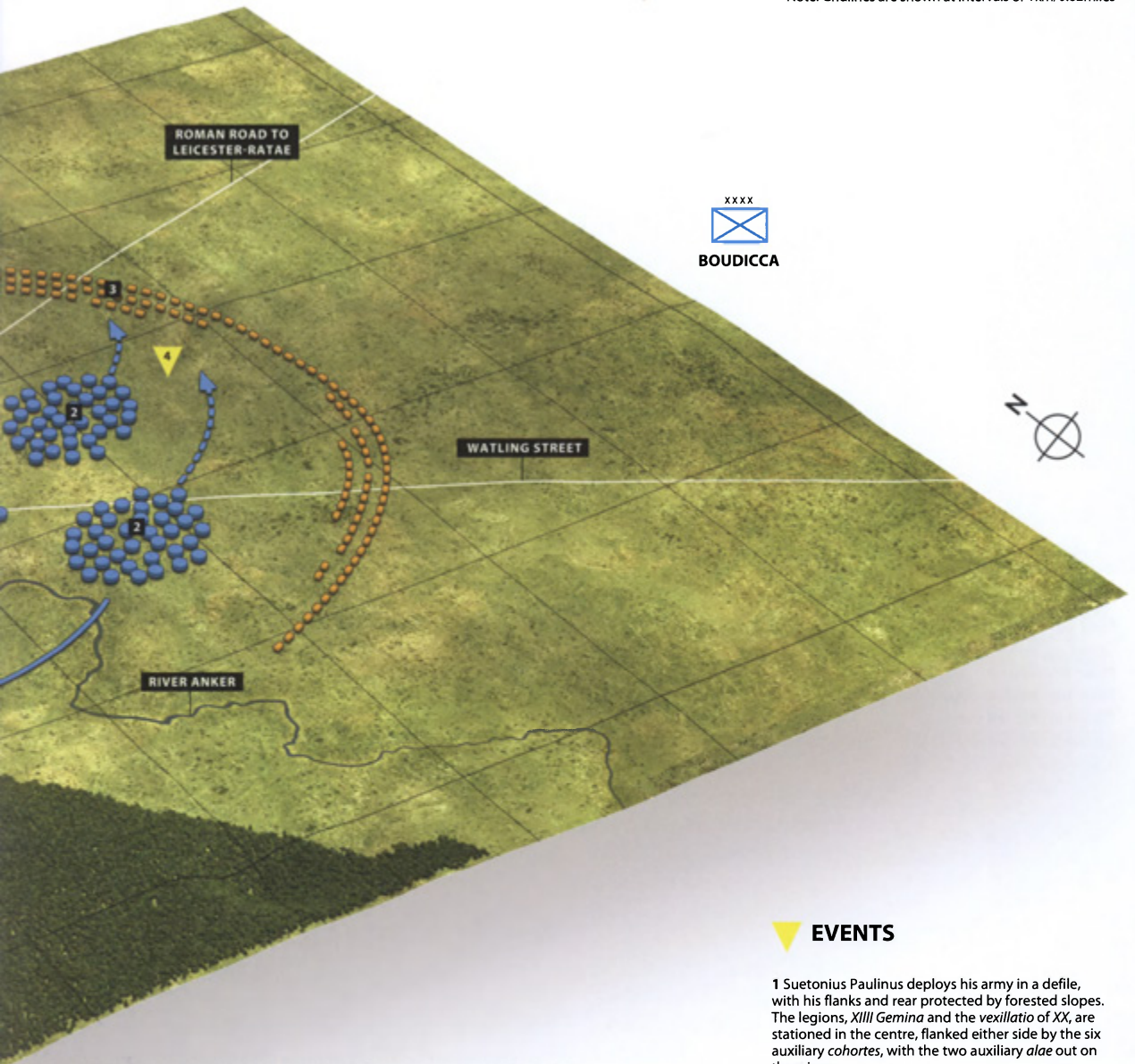
- 1 War chariots
- 2 War bands
- 3 Carts and wagons

ROMAN FORCES

- A Legions
(*legio XIII Gemina et vexillatio legio XX*)
- B Auxiliary cohorts
- C Auxiliary *alae*



SUETONIUS
PAULINUS



EVENTS

1 Suetonius Paulinus deploys his army in a defile, with his flanks and rear protected by forested slopes. The legions, *XIII Gemina* and the *vexillatio* of *XX*, are stationed in the centre, flanked either side by the six auxiliary *cohortes*, with the two auxiliary *alae* out on the wings.

2 Boudicca relies on her weight of numbers, massing her keen war bands to steamroller the Roman position. To their front are the chariots, well spaced for skirmishing, to their rear, drawn up in a rough semicircle, the carts and wagons.

3 The chariots open the day's proceedings by rushing hither and thither, the warriors onboard hurling insults and missiles. Next up the war bands, which surge up the narrowing defile against the waiting Romans. Having launched their missiles, the Romans then counterattack with sword and shield.

4 After prolonged and heavy fighting, the Britons are forced back and compressed against what has become a barricade of immovable vehicles. Eventually, Boudicca's great war host dissolves in a welter of unsparing bloodletting.

THE BATTLE OF WATLING STREET

The British rebels under Boudicca are decisively defeated by Suetonius Paulinus



Lunt Roman fort, Baginton near Coventry, interior view of the reconstructed east gateway. After the rebellion, Suetonius Paulinus ordered the construction of a chain of earth-and-timber fortifications, including that at Lunt. The fort included many stable blocks in its internal arrangement, and the recovery of many artefacts of an equine nature confirm the presence of a large number of horses on the site. (Magnus Manske)

Even if invented by Tacitus, these pragmatic words do have basis in fact, as we shall soon discover.

The Romans, nicely tucked away in their defile, would have watched the jeering and yapping throng of Britons flood the plain below them, followed by carts and wagons. As was their custom, the Britons had chariots accompanying their army. These undoubtedly opened the day's sanguinary proceedings by driving furiously up and down the Roman line, wheeling and turning, the horses beating a direful tattoo with their hooves, the warriors hurling abuse and javelins at the stony-faced soldiers.

Next the war bands surged forward across the plain and up and into the narrowing field in a gargantuan head-on assault. The shock factor would be very important. The shock had to be like a battering ram to crash through the opposition's defences, lay its world waste and open it wide to the mercy of long slashing swords. On they came, in bands of clan and family, men of every physical type and warrior-like proficiency. And as they came on, confidently expecting to slice the outnumbered opposition to bloody ribbons, they were imperceptably channelled into a packed muckle. When the two sides were just about to lock in bloody embrace, the legionaries discharged their *pila* into the oncoming Britons. They then pressed forward into the sphere of urgent action, battering at the now-lurching enemy with their shields and doing murderous work with their swords. They had two great advantages in the contest: greater tactical skill, and position on the defensive, by which they escaped any disorder caused by advancing uphill, unlike their undisciplined adversaries.

With the Romans now becoming the attacking party, Tacitus makes it seem relatively easy and quickly over, the legionaries hitting the promiscuous host with pile-driver force, shattering it to pieces, and with that victory perching on the shoulder of the Roman governor. Seemingly, Suetonius Paulinus, like Tacitus in his account, made short work of Boudicca, yet another classic case of tribal sundry facing trained soldiers, the unwieldy against the compact,

shockheaded passion versus professional sangfroid. In part, true. However, the battle account of Cassius Dio (62.12), though garbled, states the affair lasted all day – a more likely story suggesting the work at close contact became sharp and deadly, grim and sourly tenacious, bringing many casualties to both sides. It may well have been a case of British élan against Roman endurance rather than just an instance of professional soldiers versus warrior farmers more used to pushing a plough or milking a cow.

Some would argue that Boudicca's men, confident of a walkover victory, had brought along their womenfolk just to watch the spectacle from carts and wagons, which were positioned in a great semicircle behind the war bands (cf. Florus *Epitome* 1.38, Caesar *Bellum Gallicum* 1.51). I beg to differ. Until fairly recently in the history of mankind, it is unlikely that a woman could make a mark or name for herself in any place outside the traditional roles of married woman, kept woman, or mother. In the history books and films, women, if considered at all, are meant to be toiling at home, herding the livestock, maintaining the hearth, spinning flax or wool, all the while in anticipation of their menfolk returning with the spoils of the field, be it chase or combat. Women are not supposed to be violent. But women are not supposed to be warriors, whose *métier* is, after all, violence. We are not going to shift our ground dramatically in order to change this familiar picture of the usual lot of women to one of weapon-wielding Celtic Amazons. On the contrary, we are going to allow a domestic tone to enter the martial scene; behind the warriors, out there on the battlefield, stand the women. These are the women who make it possible for the men to fight, those who see to it that the society remains intact, that the children are cared for, the old ones

The high ground just above Hartshill looking west from Atherstone Road, with Stoneleigh Glebe Farm right and the Coventry Canal left. It is easy for us to picture the outnumbered forces of Suetonius Paulinus nicely tucked away up on this hill, protected flanks and rear by the heavily wooded slopes. Having negotiated the Anker, if indeed it did so, Boudicca's great war host would have had to ascend these slopes to engage the Romans. (Photograph courtesy of Leo Fields)



too. They have endured much misery, these women, but they have followed of their own free volition, for they think that freedom is more important than anything else. In all wars, women (and children) are the chief sufferers. And suffer they would that day. War is a man's activity, women are its victims.

The carts and wagons in themselves tell us something about the Britons. The agile horse-drawn chariot has always attracted more interest than the plodding carts and wagons of common use. The Britons, after all, were chariot people. Doubtless the carts and wagons were also freighted with the glorious trophies of sacked towns and farmsteads. Anyway, whether or not this was an act of rashness, coupled with a contempt for the adversary, the great arc of carts and wagons would prove to be their undoing. For when the Romans pressed into close quarters with the enemy, the venue moved further and further away from the defile, closer and closer to the carts and wagons. The Britons – what was left of them – were eventually to find themselves crushed against these vehicles, their army reduced to a disorganized shambles, just a jampack of warriors of all degrees, squashed together. The women watching from atop the vehicles would have witnessed the merciless maelstrom disgorging down the hill. Father, uncle, husband, brother, nephew, child, all alike were borne away on that tide of metal. Once down, their menfolk quickly found that the makeshift grandstand afforded by the vehicles was no more than a deadly trap that they had set for themselves. Despite fighting for their lives, and for those of their watching loved ones, all was in vain.

Presumably it was high summer, so there were some hours of daylight for the Romans to gather the fruits of victory. Nothing was too great or too insignificant to be spared Roman blades, even women and draught animals were slaughtered in the Roman fury that followed, falling on them tooth and

For those who favour Mancetter as the possible site of Boudicca's final fight there is one major topographical obstacle to overcome, namely the river Anker. Not mentioned at all by Tacitus in his brief account, Boudicca's host would have had to have waded through this watercourse at least twice during the course of the battle. Here we see the Anker looking north-west from Woodford Lane, with the A5 in the distance. (Photograph courtesy of Leo Fields)



nail, cutting them down without mercy. Men and women must have been sprawled everywhere. Screams, cries, groans, shrill pleas for mercy, babbling pleas for help, would have come from all sides. When the dust had settled, it was found that some 80,000 (a butcher's bill likely exaggerated by report) Britons were left for dead on the battlefield, for the trifling loss of some 400 Romans and a slightly larger number of wounded, or so says Tacitus (*Annales* 14.37.3). Among the survivors was Boudicca, but what was left of her world disintegrated when her war host fell to Roman swords.

The Britons should have easily defeated their Roman foe, if for no other reason than they outnumbered them considerably. Yet they did not. The truth of things always lay in contradiction; as the cup brimmed, so it spilled. Its own size and splendour had marked the British host out for total destruction. In what was certainly an astounding victory, the Romans annihilated their opponents. In his version of events at the battle, Cassius Dio picks out the stony silence of the Roman line and the riotous cacophony of the British advance:

Thereupon the armies approached each other, the barbarians with much shouting, mingled with menacing battle songs, but the Romans silently and in order until they came within a javelin's [*akóntion* in Cassius Dio's Greek] throw of the enemy. Then, while their foes were still advancing against them at a walk, the Romans rushed forward at a signal and charged at full speed, and when the clash came, easily broke through the opposing ranks; but, as they were surrounded by the great numbers of the enemy, they had to be fighting everywhere at once.

Cassius Dio 62.12.1–2

Silently executed, the Roman advance was a slow, steady affair, culminating in a close-range barrage of *pila* and an explosive charge of armoured men. The enemy often gave way very quickly, as did our front-rank Britons at the battle. As we have already noted, in his version of that fateful day's events, Tacitus has Suetonius Paulinus delivering a pre-battle speech in which he instructs his legionaries to knock over the Britons by punching them with their shields and then to jab them with their swords. In other words, he is reminding them that they have three, not two, offensive weapons: *pilum*, *gladius*, and *scutum*.

The thesis is this: our legionary at the battle was above all a trained swordsman, and had been since the days of Marius (Fields 2008: 37–42). Tacitus and Vegetius lay great stress on the *gladius* being employed by the legionary for thrusting rather than slashing. As Vegetius rightly says, 'a slash-cut, whatever its force, seldom kills' (1.12), and thus a thrust was certainly more likely to deliver the fatal wound. Having thrown the *pilum*, flicked out his *gladius*, closed ranks and charged into contact, the standard drill for the legionary was to punch the enemy in the face with the heavy metal shield boss and then jab him in the belly with the razor-sharp point of the sword. The use of the thrust also meant the legionary kept most of his torso well covered, and thus protected, by the *scutum*.

Weapons and tactics win and lose battles. The high level of training, strict discipline, and first-rate equipment proved cumulative, and combined to make the Roman legionary harder to overcome. With this rapid thrust ahead and by their armoured weight, the legionaries would have carved their way through the British ranks, forcing them back against one another, packing the unarmoured warriors so tightly together that they could not effectively

use their long slashing swords – swish, slash, chop was the best action with the weapon once the warrior had drawn it. For the legionaries did not need space to continue their mechanical butchery, but pressed on pitilessly, trampling over the fallen bodies with their heavy hobnail boots. These roughshod, but telling tactics go a long way to explain the success of the Romans against the greater numbers of the British host. As Cassius Dio wrote of the Britons that day, ‘their boldness rests on nothing more than headlong rashness unaided by arms or training’ (62.9.2). He has a point. Theirs was an army designed to shock, designed to crush the enemy with a single, swift blow. For the Romans, on the other hand, it was all about manoeuvre, economy of force, and concentration.

AFTERMATH

In the history of ‘lost causes’ it may be an agreeable sop to the pride of the vanquished to take for granted that superior numbers alone affected the result. Yet, in the great wars of the world nothing is so little proved as that the more numerous always and necessarily prevail. On the contrary, the facts of history show that brains have ever been more potent than brawn. Thus in a single day of reckoning the back of the armed rebellion had been broken, and soon after the battle Boudicca died, by taking her own life according to Tacitus (*Annales* 14.37.4, cf. 35.3), from illness according to Cassius Dio (62.12.6).

Poenius Postumus, the *praefectus castrorum* of *legio II Augusta* who had failed his chief, also killed himself when he heard the news of the victory. No reason is offered for his conduct and it is possible that he had acted out of caution, reluctant to leave the west unguarded, rather than playing the coward. After all, as a former *primus pilus*, the man must have been a well-seasoned soldier. The man was dead, and nobody wrote his story. The legion itself must have hung its head in shame. It certainly remained plain old *II Augusta* till the end of its days. Conversely, *legio XIII Gemina* became Nero’s favourite, who declared its members ‘best of all’ (Tacitus *Historiae* 2.11.2), and gained the titles *Martia Victrix* (ILS 2648), while *legio XX* gained the titles *Valeria Victrix* (RIB 508, ILS 9200). The Romans had a fine faculty for inventing warrior-like names, and such titles weren’t merely hollow sounds or extravagantly hyperbolic.

About this time, too, Suetonius Paulinus was heavily reinforced by 2,000 legionaries, eight *cohortes* of auxiliary infantry and a thousand auxiliary cavalry (perhaps two *alae quingenariae*), some 7,000 men in all and all from the Rhine garrisons. It has been suggested that the commander of this substantial *vexillatio* was Titus, the elder son of Vespasian and a future emperor. He certainly served a spell both in Germania and in Britannia, and his popularity was, according to Suetonius, ‘attested by the numerous

Lunt Roman fort, Baginton near Coventry, the circular horse-training ring, christened a *gyrus* (following the Greek soldier-historian Xenophon). This undoubted equine association, coupled with its establishment at about the same time as the rebellion, has led to the conclusion that the fort was constructed specifically in order to handle and process the large number of horses that were presumably taken as booty following the defeat of Boudicca. (Chris McKenna)





The starting point of Watling Street at the port of Richborough-Rutupiae. It was from here that procurator Catus Decianus took ship and ingloriously slunk off to Gaul. Soon after, some 7,000 soldiers from the Rhine garrison landed here, perhaps commanded by Titus, the future emperor, and marched off to reinforce the battered and depleted forces of governor Suetonius Paulinus. (Photograph courtesy of Leo Fields)

inscribed statues and busts found in both countries' (*Titus* 4.1). Anyway, with or without the aid of young Titus, the governor now concentrated his efforts against the Iceni and Trinovantes. Fugitives were hunted out and their homes and farmsteads laid waste by fire and sword, and the line of the governor's bloody march was marked not only by the smoke of burning hamlets and villages, but also by a chain of short-lived earth-and-timber forts that were constructed across central and eastern Britannia. It was a busy time for one and all, and Tacitus tells us the provincial army was 'kept under canvas' (*Annales* 14.38.1), even though the campaigning season was over and winter was approaching.

FIRE AND SWORD

Suetonius Paulinus said he would make the Iceni and Trinovantes howl. And that they did, and more. Their doom may seem excessive to us, but the governor's situation in the immediate aftermath of the Iceni revolt had been gloomy, to say the least. If he lost the struggle against them, it was very likely that he would lose the province, a misadventure that even the most phlegmatic of emperors would not have taken kindly to. To stand before Nero, a man not noted for evenness of temper and balanced judgement at the best of times, in the guise of a governor who had lost him a province was inviting not simply death but something a great deal worse for oneself and one's entire bloodline – though not the personal fate awarded by the Carthaginians to an unfortunate commander, at least a physical fate quite similar. At best he would have faced humiliation and the scorn of his peers (how sad it is to watch a great man toppled by a woman!), and the nature of the post-battle operations shows Suetonius Paulinus at his most active and obnoxious. The Iceni and Trinovantes were to be suddenly and uncomprehendingly crushed. All scores paid, with interest.

During their rebellion, the ripening grainfields were their means of subsistence, the meadows furnishing forage, and the people in liberation of whose homes they were eager to fight would hopefully have given them all of their stores. Moreover, Tacitus reports (*Annales* 14.38.2) the Britons in a state of famine after their defeat, because they had failed to sow the crops in the year of the rebellion expecting to dine on Roman supplies after their expected victory. Neglected farms, a whole year's harvest lost and, we may reasonably assume, a sizeable portion of the agricultural workforce lost in battle, wounded, sold as slaves, or simply on the run, must have brought very low the fortunes even of those households who had escaped personal retribution in the punitive operation carried out by Suetonius Paulinus.

NEW BROOM

Tranquillity for Italy, peace in the provinces, the security of the empire, these are listed by Caesar (*Bellum civile* 3.57.4) as the basic achievements for a statesman. In the last resort, of course, the peace and order of the empire depended on the proletariat army, which, from Caesar onwards, had a permanent *raison d'être*. 'Legions, fleets, provinces, the whole system was interconnected', so Tacitus (*Annales* 1.9.4) described the empire and its military tone. Thus a naked piece of imperialism could be seen as, depending on who (and where) the viewer (or the victim) was, either civic militarism (viz. defensive) or brute militarism (viz. offensive). There were certainly plenty of brutalized victims of Suetonius Paulinus' wolf policy of fire and sword.

Decianus, a sheep in wolf's clothing who had ignominiously fled to Gaul to vanish from history, was replaced by Caius Iulius Alpinus Classicianus. He was probably a Gaul, perhaps from the area around Trier-Augusta Treverorum on the Moselle. After Caesar's conquest, many Gauls romanized their names by adopting the 'Caius Iulius' of their conqueror. His wife was certainly a Gaul. She was Iulia Pacata Indiana, the daughter of Iulius Indus, a nobleman of the Treveri who raised and commanded for Rome the Gallic auxiliary cavalry unit *ala Gallorum Indiana* during the Gallic revolt of AD 21 (Tacitus *Annales* 3.42.1).

Anyway, Gaul or not, the new Roman procurator was quick to criticize the incumbent governor. Friction between governor and procurator was not uncommon, and sometime towards the end of AD 61 Nero removed Suetonius Paulinus from office, ostensibly over the loss of a few boats. Classicianus was right, of course. Suetonius Paulinus' reactions were understandable, but impolitic. His replacement was the more courteous and conciliatory Petronius Turpilianus. He himself undertook no military operations in the province. Tacitus clearly disliked this man (he was very much unlike Agricola), as he 'did not irritate the enemy' (*Annales* 14.39.4), but consolidation was what was most needed at the moment, and Petronius Turpilianus seems to have accomplished quite a lot in his two years of office. His successor, Marcus Trebellius Maximus, likewise undertook no military operations during his six years as governor. In the catty words of Tacitus, he 'kept the province in hand by a certain vigilant courtesy' (*Agricola* 16.2). Obviously consolidation was the order of the decade, not more warmongering, and the policy did not change until the appointment of our hotheaded acquaintance Petilius Cerialis, when there was a resumption of wars of conquest in the western and northern quarters of the island under the new Flavian dynasty. He brought with him

legio II Adiutrix pia fidelis, a brand-new outfit levied by Vespasian from the loyal marines of the Ravenna fleet, *classis Ravennas*, to replace *legio XIII Gemina Martia Victrix* sent to serve on the Rhine. With the garrison back up to four legions, it was now clear that Britannia would remain a province of the empire.

Command in the far province was time and time again felt to require the appointment of some of Rome's greatest generals, and Petilius Cerialis was no exception. Yet had someone suggested to him when he was a legate in Britannia that he would return to the province as its governor, Petilius Cerialis probably would have laughed. We last met him escaping from total defeat when in command of *legio VIII Hispana*, one of the notable events of the Boudiccan rebellion. Since then he had fought firmly, albeit foolhardily, for Vespasian in the civil war (Tacitus *Historiae* 3.59.2, 78.2–80.2), and he would successfully govern Britannia between AD 71 and 74 (Tacitus *Agricola* 17.1). He was the founder of York-Eboracum as a base for his old legion, *VIII Hispana*, which was moved there from Lincoln-Lindum.

Petilius Cerialis may have been closely connected with the emperor (possibly his son-in-law), and like him, may have been a Sabine too. All the same, he was a dashing general. Tacitus, who obviously had a soft spot for the man, describes his raffish and maverick character, careless of the trappings of discipline and a brilliant improviser. A man whose career is remarkable for the number of times he escaped from the brink of military disaster, or, as Tacitus would say, 'luck always covered his lapses' (*Historiae* 5.21.3). In a singular speech to the Treveri and Lingones of north-east Gaul, the occasion being the most critical point of the great provincial revolt on the Rhine, Tacitus would attribute to him that crisp appraisal of military imperialism:

King's Cross Station, London, formerly the site of the village of Battle Bridge. Boudicca's body is said to lie, prosaically, somewhere under platform 10 of the railway station, a popular tradition that has arisen out of the hypothesis of Lewis Spence (1937: 251–54), an expert on Celtic folklore who concluded that the final battle took place in the valley which King's Cross and St Pancras stations now occupy. Of course, this wonderful tale must now rank alongside that concerning platform nine and three-quarters. (Marcin Wichary)





Boadicea, Queen of the Iceni, designed by C.H.S., engraved by Richard Havell the Elder and published in 1815. A redheaded, spear-carrying Boudicca stands before a rather solidly built chariot. One of her distressed daughters can be seen sitting in the vehicle. The rediscovery of the works of Tacitus during the Renaissance reintroduced Boudicca into British culture, and by the Enlightenment her fame (along with her chariot) had taken on fabled proportions. (Private Collection/Bridgeman Art Library)

‘no peace without armies, no armies without pay, no pay without taxes’ (*Historiae* 4.74.1). He would take Agricola to Britannia as one of his legates (*Tacitus Agricola* 8.2), to command *legio XX Valeria Victrix* in fact. It would be his second stretch. As Tacitus proudly broadcasts, ‘when Britannia with the rest of the world was recovered by Vespasian, generals became great, armies excellent, and the enemy’s hopes languished’ (*Agricola* 17.1). For our distinguished historian, hardly surprisingly, the greatest of these ‘great generals’ would be his own father-in-law, the governor fated to direct a major assault on the northern half of the island. But that is another story.

BOUDICCA BECOMES BOADICEA

The famous British woman behind the firestorm that swept Britannia during the reign of the infamous Roman emperor is a historical enigma about whom very little is actually known. Even the spelling and pronunciation of her name are subject to considerable debate. Her name in the Celtic tongue was probably *Boudica* (pronounced ‘Bowdeekah’), and the doubling of the c by Tacitus and a later medieval misreading would produce the traditional but incorrect form *Boadicea*. The name *Boudica* meant precisely ‘Victoria’, which obviously helped kindle renewed interest in her during the reign of the third



London (gouache on paper), by the London artist Patrick Nicolle (1907–95). Like Colchester-Camulodunum, London-Londinium was not fortified at the time of the rebellion, and this representation perceptibly shows the town after its gradual recovery. At the top left we see a permanent fort – something almost unparalleled in the cities of the empire outside Rome – which was probably erected around the time of Hadrian's visit to the province in AD 122. (Private Collection/© Look and Learn/Bridgeman Art Library)

great warrior queen of the Britons, and derived from the Celtic word for 'victory', *bouda*, hence the modern Welsh name *Buddug*. There are some who would argue that *Boudica* was actually a cognomen and not her given name at all, much like those who believe the name of a legendary warrior hero of the Celtic Britons, Arthur – which is derived from the rather unusual Roman family name Artorius – meant 'bear' and may have just referred to his famous battle standard.

Since Boudicca was brought back into the historical light during the Renaissance, albeit at first with a great deal of muddle and confusion, she has been hijacked and recreated by many writers, poets and playwrights. Thus we are offered the 'Voada' of Hector Boece, the 'Bonducca' of Edmund Spenser, the 'Bonduca' of John Fletcher, and the 'Boadicea' of John Milton, to name just four reincarnations of the resurrected warrior queen. Thereafter, wordsmiths, both great and small, seem to adopt the name (and persona) they most fancied, ranging from Bonduca cast as a dreamy maiden, pretty, pouting, precious (Edward Howard), to Boadicea in the guise of an anti-Boer imperialist, pugnacious, potent, proud (Marie Trevelyan). Needless to say, she has served as a banner icon for the suffragettes, a doughty moniker for a stretch of the Western Front, and in both world wars the Royal Navy used a scout cruiser (1908) and a B-class destroyer (1930) called *Boadicea*, the name by which our rebel queen is certainly best known.

On the plinth of Thornycroft's colossal bronze are carved the words of William Cowper from his popular poem 'Boadicea: An Ode' (1780): 'Regions Caesar never knew/Thy posterity shall sway' (lines 29–30). Ironically, the poet had coopted the British queen as an imperial warrior to stand against the American rebels, though he was writing when imperialism was still fashionable. Having been moved from the realm of the actual, where she wanted to be, to the realm of the symbolic, where modern imagination has placed her, Boudicca the woman became Boadicea the legend.

There have been male dissenters. The British priest Gildas, a rough contemporary of the shadowy Arthur (of whom he says nothing), was probably alluding to Boudicca when he scribbled (in convoluted Latin) 'a treacherous

lioness butchered the governors who had been left to give fuller voice and strength to the endeavours of Roman rule' (*De excidio et conquestu Britanniae* §6). To our dried-up and vicious old priest she was no heroine. His chant is 'Women are perfidious'. In his diatribe he never pauses to think why Boudicca wished the Romans wiped out. Completely unsettling, she serves as a cautionary example of what women should not be, like the Greeks' Amazonian tales. His obvious spite does his case no good, yet in the dark patriarchal days of Gildas, it was the Romans who were wearing the white hats, the black ones having been given to Germanic intruders. And so Boudicca was cast as the villain who wilfully deprived good Romans of their lifeblood.

Throughout history, one person's hero has been another's villain, especially when it is a woman who makes a place for herself in the world of men. Boudicca is one of those strong women whose image the world of men has always preferred to fashion out of myth rather than fact. She lived, much like the enigmatic Cleopatra, for posterity not as a queen with a career to be chronicled, but as a symbol of the power of woman over man.

THE BATTLEFIELD TODAY

As the saying goes, absence of evidence is not evidence of absence. Yet by their very nature battles are messy affairs, leaving their own particularly macabre litter in their bloody wake. So now we come to the million-dollar question. Where was the final battle fought? An awkward question as we do not know where the battlefield was. Presumably somewhere in middle England is a safe bet, along or very near Watling Street. Though this particular site has yet to surrender evidence of a life-and-death struggle, we are at Mancetter in North Warwickshire.

The region is no stranger to 'battles long ago', Bosworth Field being some 8km to the north-east along the line of a Roman road (now Fenn Lanes) to Leicester (Ratae). In fact, the pretender Henry Tudor spent the eve of what was to be his first battle at the Cistercian Abbey of Merevale, perhaps attending services, while the soldiers of his mercenary raggle-taggle got down to more mundane matters, stripping the neighbouring villages of Atherstone, Mancetter, Witherley and Fenny Drayton of their victuals.

The signpost to the slumbering village of Mancetter is easily missed along the A5 to Tamworth. Down Mancetter Road (B4111), standing next door to each other, are the handsome parish church dedicated to St Peter and the quaint timber-framed Manor House, once the home of Robert Glover, the Protestant martyr. Occupying the site of a Roman military installation, archaeological investigations here have tantalizingly uncovered three complete wine amphorae, Claudian bronze and copper coins and Neronian pottery.

The high ground south of Mancetter, which is easily reached via Quarry Lane, is composed of diorite, an extremely hard granite-like rock that has stubbornly resisted the elements. It is this all-weather quality, unfortunately, which has attracted the rapacious quarrier seeking first-class durable stone for roads and ballast. Quarrying continues to this day.

But all is not lost. Despite being disfigured the steep escarpment is still thickly cloaked in woodland, ash and oak in the main. Suetonius Paulinus could hardly have picked a better location, if indeed he picked this particular one, from the spectators' point of view. His commanding position was made all the more prominent by the otherwise open and level landscape it dominated. As Boudicca moved towards the waiting Roman army, she must have crossed bare boggy ground. Now extensively drained to grow crops and graze livestock, the flat floodplain of the meandering Anker is also cut up by country roads and hedge systems. Another legacy of the industrial age and the machinery of progress are of course the Rugby–Stafford railway line and the

Coventry Canal, both of which greatly detract from the scene by slicing right across the battlefield immediately to the west of the Anker.

Places change over time. Needless to say, battlefields remain a largely unprotected species, likely prey to the ravages of modern planning. Alas, the battlefield which witnessed the final slaughter of the Boudiccan cause remains unknown, and experts and enthusiasts continue to quibble over its actual location (e.g. High Cross in Leicestershire, Cuttle Hill in Northamptonshire, Church Stowe in Northamptonshire, and Arbury Banks in Hertfordshire, to name just some of the more sensible suggestions on offer).

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GLOSSARY

<i>Adiutrix</i>	‘Assistant’ – offering support to regular forces
<i>Ala/alae</i>	cavalry ‘wing’
<i>Augusta</i>	‘Augustan’ – reconstituted by Augustus
<i>Auxilia</i>	auxiliary units or auxiliaries
<i>Beneficiarius/beneficarii</i>	privileged soldiers
<i>Caliga/caligae</i>	hobnailed boot
<i>Centurio/centuriones</i>	officer in command of <i>centuria</i> (q.v.)
<i>Centuria/centuriae</i>	basic subunit of <i>cohors</i> (q.v.)
<i>Cingulum/cinguli</i>	sword/dagger belt
<i>Civitas/civitates</i>	self-governing administrative division loosely based on pre-Roman tribal territories
<i>Clipeus/clipi</i>	shield used by <i>auxilia</i> (q.v.)
<i>Cohors/cohortes</i>	basic tactical unit of <i>legio</i> (q.v.)
<i>Contubernium</i>	‘tentful’ – mess-unit of eight infantry, ten per <i>centuria</i> (q.v.)
<i>Decurio/decuriones</i>	officer in command of <i>turma</i> (q.v.)
<i>Denarius/denarii</i>	‘ten as piece’ – silver coin, now worth 16 <i>asses</i>
<i>Dolabra/dolabrae</i>	entrenching tool
<i>Duplicarius</i>	second-in-command of <i>turma</i> (q.v.)
<i>Focale/focalis</i>	woollen scarf
<i>Gemina</i>	‘Twin’ – one legion made out of two
<i>Hispana</i>	‘Iberian’ – served in Iberia
<i>Lancea/lancae</i>	light spear
<i>Legatus/legati</i>	‘deputy’ – subordinate commander
<i>Legio/legiones</i>	principal unit of Roman Army
<i>Lorica/loricae</i>	body armour
<i>Mortarium/mortaria</i>	‘mortar’ – heavy, pottery bowl with large rim, gritty interior surface and pouring spout, used for pulverizing and mixing food
<i>Miles/militis</i>	soldier
<i>Mille passus</i>	‘one-thousand paces’ – Roman mile (1.48km), a pace being two steps, left plus right
<i>Optio/optionses</i>	second-in-command of <i>centuria</i> (q.v.)
<i>Peregrinus/peregrini</i>	non-Roman citizen
<i>Phalera/phalerae</i>	‘disc’ – military decoration
<i>Pia fidelis</i>	‘Loyal and True’
<i>Praefectus castrorum</i>	third-in-command of <i>legio</i> (q.v.)
<i>Primigenia</i>	‘Firstborn’
Samian ware	Roman tableware in a fine red clay with glossy surface, decorated or plain, mass-produced in Gaul and conspicuously used throughout empire from late 1st century BC to early 4th century AD
<i>Sestercel/sestertii</i>	brass coin worth ¼ of <i>denarius</i> (q.v.)
<i>Spatha/spathae</i>	cavalry sword
La Tène	‘the shallows’ – Iron Age culture named after site at La Tène, Lac de Neuchâtel in Switzerland
<i>Torque/torques</i>	‘neckband’ – 1. Celtic status symbol ornament 2. Roman military decoration
<i>Tribunus/tribuni</i>	tribune
<i>Turma/turmae</i>	basic subunit of <i>ala</i> (q.v.)
<i>Valeria</i>	‘Powerful’
<i>Victrix</i>	‘Victorious’
<i>Vexillatio/vexillationes</i>	detachment
<i>Vitis</i>	centurion’s twisted vine-stick

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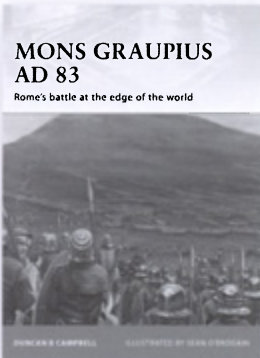
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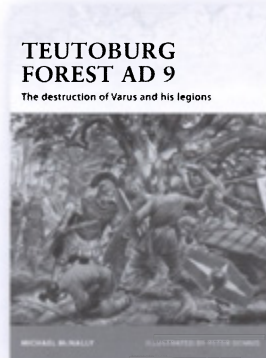
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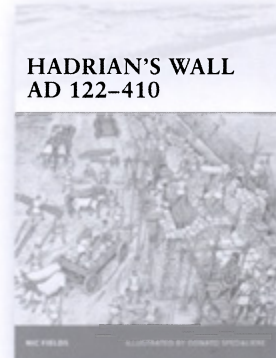
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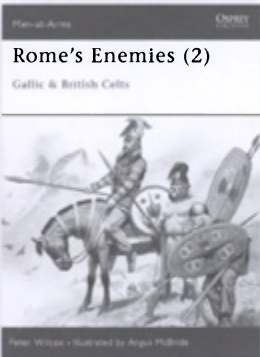
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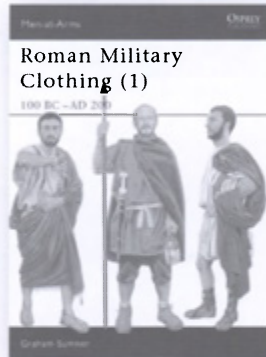
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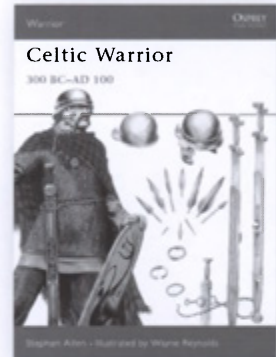
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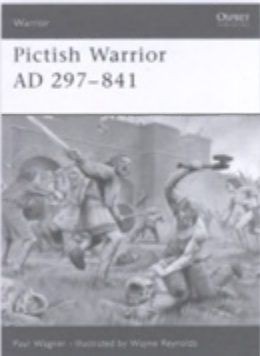
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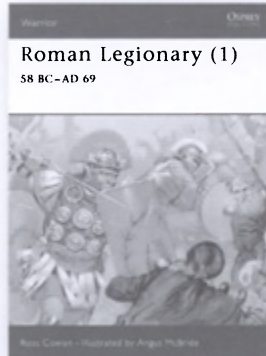
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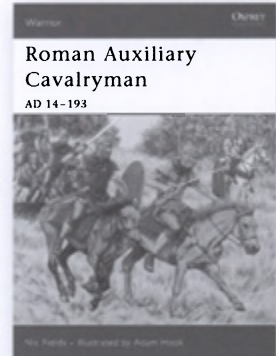
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