Half-title: Uley (Gloucestershire).
Bronze figurine of Mercury holding a *caduceus*, a staff entwined with two serpents. Such figures were probably sold in and around cult sites for pilgrims to use as offerings, or to take away as souvenirs. Height 10 cm.

Title page: Hadrian's Wall (Northumberland).
Milecastle 39 ('Castle Nick'). Milecastles, built roughly every Roman mile along the Wall, accommodated small garrisons that supervised transit across the frontier through these fortified gateways. This milecastle was built AD *c.* 124, probably by the legion, *VI Victrix*.

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PREFACE

Roman Britain was Britain's first truly historical period, and as such it has deservedly been the subject of many books, especially in the last thirty years. Today, thanks to excavations, scientific techniques and new research, we know far more about this unique mixture of classical and Celtic civilization. However, the basic history has not altered much. Instead it is the archaeology that has changed, and with it there has been a reappraisal of the architectural, material and social structure of Roman Britain. In the process, the history has become a little lost, or at any rate taken for granted.

Some of the greatest excavations of Romano-British archaeological sites were conducted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. These included the work at Silchester and numerous digs along Hadrian's Wall, and at other military sites nearby. The techniques of the time meant many features in the ground went unnoticed, whilst contemporary attitudes had their own effect. A preoccupation with the Roman army in Britain was common, and lay to a large extent in personal experience of Britain's own imperial armed forces. Military documents found at Vindolanda in the 1970s show that the Roman army was far from being the rigid and predictable organization archaeologists once assumed, and probably also reflect other aspects of the way Roman Britain and other provinces were managed.

Perhaps this mirrors how our world has also changed. Equally, each generation of historians and archaeologists wants to make its mark. Part of this process is a ritual re-examination of some of the assumptions and attitudes of previous generations. An old dogma is supplanted by a new one. But just as the certainties of older scholarly attitudes now seem easy to question, we also need to bear in mind that the certainties of our own time are just as likely to be flawed. Today, dendrochronology and other modern archaeological techniques are often treated as infallible sources of objective information. Archaeologists also sometimes infer more from their excavations than the evidence can really support. The reality is that flawed historical and literary material cannot be made good by archaeology, not least because the evidence is of an entirely different kind. The two complement one another, but they are not mutual substitutes.

1. Gresham Street (London). This bronze cauldron was found in a well at Gresham Street, constructed *c.* AD 100. After the well was destroyed by fire, it was back-filled with rubbish, including this cauldron, perhaps used initially for collecting water.



Even so, the archaeological record has been transformed. New techniques have made it possible to recognize environmental evidence in unprecedented detail, or to identify occupation levels that would entirely have escaped the notice of a Victorian archaeologist. Despite its usefulness, the metal-detector is regretted by many archaeologists because of the reckless way some detectorists have used it. However, some extraordinary finds have changed our view of Roman Britain forever. The fact that some finds have turned up in places that archaeologists either would not, or could not, have looked only goes to show how selective the 'official' record can be. The Mildenhall Treasure (see pp. 258–59), found in the 1940s, was even thought by some at the time to have been a modern import from North Africa. Since then, the discovery of exceptional treasure hoards such as Thetford and Hoxne, along with a very large number of minor finds, have radically altered our knowledge of the sheer quantity of Romano-British sites. The remarkable coinage of the rebel emperor Carausius (286–93), with its dramatic series of unprecedented mythical and literary types, was once rare. Now far more is known about this emperor from his numismatic record.

Archaeology and history belong to their own time. Today, old certainties have been replaced by doubt, and a palpable fear for the future. A parallel often drawn today is how the increase in American power mirrors Rome's rise, and how America has come to define today's world order. Now that international terrorism and environmental concerns have challenged our sense of security, it becomes easier to see what the dramatic decline of Roman power in the West in the fourth century meant for the Empire's population. Likewise, an increasing focus on native identities in Roman Britain reflects an increased respect for ethnic identities in our own time. Imperialism has increasingly become condemned as a purely oppressive force, given weight by its appalling excesses in the twentieth century, and reinforced by a contemporary sense of the 'victim'. Yet life is rarely quite so simple. The complex relationships between native society and Roman culture in Britain were just that, and evidently reached some sort of equilibrium which was surprisingly stable, and which seems to have been eventually acceptable to most of the participants. A new approach to the late Iron Age has made a very good case for the idea that some tribal aristocracies welcomed, and even coveted, Roman influence.

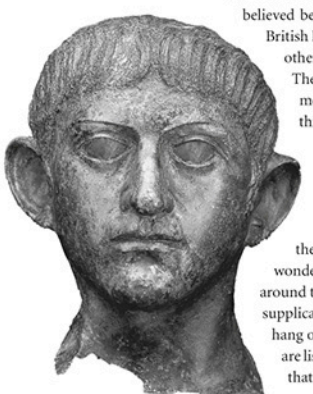
2. Crosby Garrett (Cumbria). Found in 2010, this copper-alloy cavalry sports helmet was probably worn by an auxiliary trooper during ceremonial displays of military skills and re-enactments of legendary battles. A griffin sits atop the Phrygian cap headpiece. The helmet was sold at auction for £2.3 million in October 2010. First to third century AD.



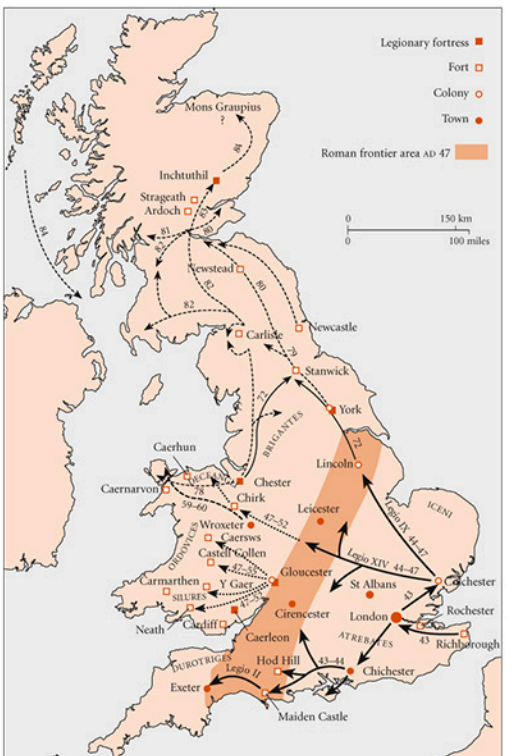
his prestige and qualities, Augustus held a unique portfolio of offices within that system. Power was legally transferred by appointing an heir to appropriate positions, but in practice it was transferred to the closest Augustus had to a son, his stepson and son-in-law, Tiberius. But by AD 37 Tiberius had degenerated into a perverted, half-crazed and hated recluse. And by 41 Caligula, Augustus' great-grandson, had degenerated into a perverted, half-crazed and hated megalomaniac.

It was remarkable that the office survived the murder of Caligula in 41 at all. Claudius [14] was the grandson of Augustus' sister, Octavia, nephew of Tiberius and grandson of Augustus' wife, Livia, by her first marriage. He had survived the murderous intrigues of previous years thanks to his reputation as a buffoon, something he probably cultivated in the interests of survival. He was made emperor because he was available to the Praetorian Guard who had just murdered Caligula. But Claudius was more than equal to the position.

Claudius managed to remain in post because he knew he needed to prove himself. Britain had proved too much for Caesar. Now it offered Claudius the prospect of a military triumph, an essential qualification for a Roman emperor, and of exceeding his esteemed ancestor's achievements. Conquest lubricated the wheels of power. It provided more land, people and resources to appropriate and exploit, and – more subtly – the opportunity for Rome's magnanimous donation of Roman ways to other parts of the world. Of course, this involved exploitation, but it also satisfied a commitment to promoting a way of life the Romans genuinely believed benefited others. The Victorians, who busily exploited the British Empire, also brought innovations in communications and other public facilities, and this was equally true of the Romans. The benefits they brought might have been through the mechanisms of enslavement, but many people 'enslaved' in this way seem to have been prepared to put up with the hardships. In this manner, so the Romans believed, their conquests were legitimized and morally justifiable. In Britain, the consequences of Augustus' diplomacy were dynastic ambitions in which Roman backing was decisive. Strabo reported that several British rulers had solicited the friendship of Augustus by sending envoys and gifts.[2] No wonder two British kings felt they could flee to him for support around the year AD 7, as part of the routine comings and goings of supplicants more than happy to sacrifice a little independence to hang on to a powerful friend. Tincomarus and Dubnovellaunus are listed in Augustus' *Res Gestae*, along with several other rulers that had sought refuge at Rome.[3] Coinage shows that Tincomarus was a ruler of the Atrebates, and Dubnovellaunus of the Cantiaci, in Kent. Tincomarus claimed to be a son of Commios, either Caesar's Commios or a son of his with the same name. Why either Tincomarus or Dubnovellaunus should have fled is unknown, but factional politics within each tribe are no less likely a reason than the machinations of more powerful neighbours. The important point is that these kings owed their positions to Augustus. What Augustus had effectively done was to initiate and encourage the creation of states ruled by dynasties, whose members focused their attention on consolidating and maintaining dynastic interests.



14. Claudius (AD 41–54). Bronze head of the emperor, found at the River Alde at Rendham, near Saxmundham, Suffolk. It is possible that this in fact represents the young Nero, based on its resemblance to coin portraits of the juvenile emperor issued prior to the Boudican revolt. (British Museum).



15. The conquest. The progress of the conquest between 43 and *c.* 87 can be only approximately reconstructed from historical sources and inscriptions. Evidence from Alchester has been used to argue that the campaign in the south may have been directed from further north than hitherto thought, but this is based on a single tombstone of a veteran of the II legion.



29. Colchester (Essex).
The Temple of Claudius as it might have appeared in the first century.

30. Lincoln (Lincolnshire).
The east gate of the colony at Lincoln (*Lindum*) contained traces of the timber gate of the legionary fortress of the 60s and 70s. The timbers are modern replicas.

what the Britons thought of her. For both Tacitus and Dio, Boudica served as a perfect literary foil for Nero. They both wrote after Nero's reign, and his collapse into narcissistic self-indulgence. Nero was in every sense the opposite of the ideal Roman leader. Boudica, in contrast, was attributed with all the virtues Nero lacked, made doubly paradoxical by the fact that she was a woman. It is possible that Boudica was a minor player, whose role was exaggerated by the historians for literary and moral effect. They had to show the foe to have been sufficiently dramatic a threat to warrant the level of the disaster. Thus they magnified the Roman achievement in defeating her, and told a moral tale. Britain's rebels might have compromised the Empire, but they had the qualities that had made Rome great. For many of Rome's commentators, the irony was that wealth and success were sending Rome spiralling into decadence and corrupted values.



Somewhere in the Midlands, Paullinus, now with his full army, faced the rebels. A set-piece battle was exactly what he wanted, and it was the first time that things had gone his way. Boudica had lost the initiative. The defeat of the rebel horde was utterly decisive for southern Britain. Tacitus claimed that 80,000 Britons were killed at a cost of just 400 Romans. The figures are bound to be exaggerated, but probably reflect the imbalance. The rebels were routed because they were weighed down with baggage, loot and their dependents. Boudica might have inspired them, but judgment was poor and the outcome inevitable. She was said by Tacitus to have committed suicide, and by Dio to have grown ill and died. This confusion alone ought to make us wonder just how important she really was. She may have been a peripheral component of the revolt, or a figurehead whose personal reputation grew rapidly in local and Roman lore because of her exotic, even erotic, appeal. The reality was that the revolt had presented the Britons with nothing more than chaos. Crops had not been planted, and hungry people have little stomach for rebellion.

Togidubnus might have been a quisling, but he and his kingdom survived intact and prospered. He and Boudica symbolize the split in British feelings about the Romans, and the consequences of picking the wrong side. Togidubnus was one of those tribal leaders who accepted Roman power and what it could do to validate and support his own position. Such power might have been totalitarian and absolute, but men like Tacitus could, and did, articulate criticism of the Roman state, and the legal system provided recourse to justice. Bad emperors were murdered, and bad governors were prosecuted. Roman culture was, by ancient standards, occasionally surprisingly liberal. Boudica represented another variety of tribal leadership, one that sought to deny the broader population access to the very things so many tribal leaders had been taking advantage of for decades.

No wonder then that no tribe of southern, central or eastern Britain ever rebelled again [31]. To begin with, they had little opportunity. The army was reinforced, and kept mobilized building forts throughout the

31. Nero (54–68).
A brass *sestertius* struck at Rome, *c.* 64–68. The reverse depicts *Roma*, the personification of the city. In the aftermath of the Boudican revolt, the basic stability of the Roman state proved an important part of settling Britain. It was the end of tribal rebellion in southern Britain.





adopted them as sons. The Empire reached its greatest extent under Trajan with the conquests of Parthia and Dacia, before Hadrian abandoned some of the latest additions and consolidated the frontiers.

We have occasional glimpses of Britain in this period. Suetonius mentions a governor of Britain under Domitian called Gaius Sallustius Lucullus. Lucullus had invented a new type of spear, but was foolish enough to name it the *Lucullean*.[32] The paranoid Domitian promptly had him executed. Lucius Neratius Marcellus is named as a governor of Britain on a military diploma of 19 January 103, and also turns up in Pliny the Younger's letters, as well as on one of the writing tablets discovered at the fort of Vindolanda (Northumberland).[33] The Vindolanda writing tablets are an immensely important resource, but they represent

THE VINDOLANDA WRITING TABLETS

The stone fort visible today at Vindolanda [40], near Hadrian's Wall, was not built until the 220s, replacing an earlier stone fort, built around a century earlier under Hadrian (117–38). Before that there had been a series of turf and timber forts, dating back at least to *c.* 90. Thanks to the sensational discovery of wooden writing tablets in waterlogged deposits associated with the timber forts, Vindolanda is now one of the most important Roman military sites in the Empire. Such wooden tablets rarely survive, and they provide a priceless window into the bureaucracy and correspondence that kept the Roman world functioning.

The tablets date mostly to the period *c.* 90–105, when the Ninth Cohort of Batavians and the First Cohort of Tungrians were stationed at Vindolanda. They include work rosters, letters both official and private, and the celebrated strength report of the First Cohort of Tungrians. 'I have written to you several times', complains Octavius, in a letter concerning money needed to pay for grain.[34] In another, Florus seeks the urgent loan of an axe [38].[35] Much the most moving, however, is the invitation from Severa to her friend, Sulpicia Lepidina, the wife of Flavius Cerealis, who commanded the Batavians [39].

Another letter discusses the thorny problem of how many wagons would be needed to transport stone.[36] It is certainly not the only one to mention the transportation of commodities by road. The letter from Octavius mentions wagons and the memorable observation that he is not prepared to risk injury to his animals *dum viae male sunt*, 'while the roads are bad'.[37] Another letter (*c.* 180–200) from Martius asks Victor to write to him at *Bremesio* (probably Piercebridge), and if that is not possible to leave the letter at *Cataractonium* (Catterick). Victor seems to have been heading south from Vindolanda along Dere Street, perhaps on his way to York, or even to London.



38. ***Left.*** **Vindolanda (Northumberland).** Letter from Florus to Calavirus concerning a sealed box and the loan of an axe. (British Museum).

39. ***Below left.*** **Vindolanda.** Letter from Claudia Severa inviting Sulpicia Lepidina to her birthday party. About 100. (British Museum).

To Sulpicia Lepidina (wife) of Cerealis, from Severa:
Claudia Severa, greetings to her Lepidina
On the third day before the Ides of September, sister, for the day of my birthday celebration, I give you a warm invitation to make sure that you come to us, to make the day more enjoyable for me by your arrival, if you are present. Give my greetings to your Cerealis. My Aelius and my little son send you their greetings. I shall expect you, sister. Farewell, sister, my dearest soul, as I hope to prosper and hail.[38]



40. Vindolanda. Aerial view of the third-century fort, near Hadrian's Wall. In the foreground, the civilian settlement (*vicus*) clusters around the road. The late first-century timber forts that produced the writing tablets lie at much lower levels.





63, 64. Carausius (286–93). A pair of bronze medallions, probably struck as donatives. The letters on the bottom of each reverse represent the initial letters of words from the Fourth *Eclogue* of Virgil, and mean 'the Golden Age is back. Now a new generation is let down from heaven above.'





Carausius moved decisively to confound his critics. In 286, Carausius declared himself emperor. Almost all that we know about the regime has had to be pieced together from a few scattered references in imperial histories, panegyrics and coinage. It is Carausian coinage that above all else demonstrates the regime's flamboyant and imaginative command of Roman iconography and imagery [63, 64]. Utilizing phrases, words and images from Virgilian poetry, Carausius plundered the classical Roman tradition to portray himself as a messianic figure who would restore Rome's golden age.[13] Such use of coinage as a propaganda tool was unprecedented. Although Carausius borrowed ideas from Postumus, he made a much more impressive job of it. No official Roman coinage ever carried such explicit literary references. He styled himself 'Marcus Aurelius Mausaeus Carausius' to manufacture a spurious lineage from the second-century Antonine emperors.

Carausius issued the best-quality silver coins produced for 220 years on which to display his slogans. These were swamped by his abundant bronze coinage that repeated many of the same themes and added a host more, including types commemorating legions stationed both in Britain and on the Continent. Some of the coins were produced at London in its first era as a mint town. The 52,503 coins of the Frome Hoard, the biggest Roman coin hoard from Britain, include the largest group known of Carausius' bronze coins, as well as five of his silver *denarii* [65]. Unworn, the latter may have been deposited by a soldier or official who received them from Carausius as a donative. Carausius is recorded on a single inscription, on a milestone found near Carlisle.[14] Together with the mint at London, it helps show that Carausius had spread himself from one end of Britain to the other.

Some Carausian coinage was targeted specifically at the army. The reformed silver would have gone a long way to consolidating his legitimacy in military eyes. It is also likely that the urban élite and rural landowners regarded his efforts at sea as proof that he was a more useful protector than Maximian. In 286 almost any mature man of consequence whose wealth and property was in Britain would have grown up under the Gallic Empire and seen how effective Postumus had been. Roman Britain's élite seem to have been excluded from the upper echelons of Roman cosmopolitan society. This exclusion, deliberate or accidental, may well have contributed to a feeling of isolation, elevating a sense of parochial loyalties. Paradoxically, however, a striking characteristic of the revolt was the way in which Carausius appealed to classical aspirations and themes. There was no attempt to revive ancient tribal traditions or identities. It was a mark of how much Britain had changed in the 230 years since the Boudican revolt. The Carausian mission was an explicit effort to turn back the clock to Augustan Rome, not to the world of Caratacus.

Carausius was a source of monumental embarrassment to the Tetrarchy. Bad weather wrecked their plans to invade Britain in 289. Carausius remained in control, but by 293 he decided to adopt a more conciliatory approach. With breathtaking cheek he issued coins in the names of Diocletian and Maximian, as well as himself. For good measure he added a type that showed the three of them together, with a legend that read 'Carausius and his brothers'. He had, in effect, appointed himself to the Tetrarchy. In the same year, Constantius recaptured Boulogne, causing terminal damage to Carausius' prestige. Before the year was out, Carausius had been murdered and replaced by his finance officer, Allectus. Allectus had none of Carausius' flair. His coinage was produced with greater mechanical competence, but no more silver was produced, and the bronze and gold coins exhibited none of the imaginative panache that distinguished Carausian issues.

Apart from the Carausian milestone, only the coinage of Carausius and Allectus survives as a manifestation of the breakaway regime. The fort at Pevensey seems to have been begun around 293, suggesting that it was ordered by either Carausius or Allectus, but as a single site in a much more protracted series it would be unwise to attach too much significance to it. Portchester hardly amounts to a major strategic initiative. Massive structural timbers found on St Peter's Hill in London were felled in or around 294, and it has been suggested that their size is evidence for a monumental building, possibly Allectus' headquarters. The connection makes for good archaeological speculation, but the nature of the building, as well as for whom it was built, is unknown. In any case, timbers felled in 294 might not have been used for several years, and by 296 Allectus was dead.

In 296, a new imperial fleet set out in two waves. One flotilla was commanded by Constantius Chlorus, and embarked from Boulogne. The other, commanded by the praetorian prefect, Asclepiodotus, left from the Seine. Asclepiodotus approached the south coast of Britain by the Isle of Wight. Shielded by fog, he landed somewhere in the Solent area and headed north. His arrival ambushed Allectus, who had to flee inland before he had had time to organize his forces. Asclepiodotus caught up with whatever army Allectus was able to pull together, defeating it and killing Allectus. Constantius, meanwhile, sailed up the Thames and seized London to the obsequious gratitude of the population. Or so it was claimed. Britain had been 'restored to the eternal light', as a celebratory gold medallion issued later by Constantius bragged [66]. But it was not the last time Britain would play host to a usurper.





65. Carausius (286–93). Silver *denarius* from the Frome Hoard with the RSR mark and a reverse depicting the emperor being greeted by Britannia with the legend *expectate veni*, 'Come, the long awaited one', an allusion to Book V, line 262 of Virgil's *Aeneid*.

66 Constantius I (293–306). A gold medallion showing Constantius as Caesar, struck at Trier. The reverse commemorates the 'liberation' of London and the 'restoration of the eternal light' after the defeat of Allectus. About 296. (British Museum).





ROMAN LONDON

London is undoubtedly Roman Britain's greatest legacy. At 138 ha (330 acres), it was the largest city in the province, and served as the centrepiece for a system of communication that has shaped the face of modern Britain. London is today exactly what it was in the beginning: an international commercial metropolis. Ironically, the intensive occupation of London since antiquity means that more Roman material has been found here than at any other Romano-British town. Bombing in World War II and the subsequent redevelopment has led to an almost unending sequence of major excavations and discoveries.

Until the conquest in 43, the Thames served largely as a tribal boundary. There is no trace of any significant prehistoric settlement in the London area. After the conquest, the Thames became the most important route into the heart of Britain. By the year 50 a bridge had been built, close to the present site of London Bridge. It was a decisive moment. London's name provides us with no clues as to its origins. But by the time of the Boudican revolt, *Londinium* was a well-known and prosperous trading centre that had developed of its own accord. Yet the city was important enough to make it one of the three key urban targets for the rebellious Britons. It seems that the combination of a vast increase in military commercial traffic under Roman occupation, together with the bridge and roads made London's development into a significant town inevitable. The most likely scenario is that Roman entrepreneurs, servicing the influx of soldiers and administrators, took advantage of the facilities and settled there. Confident and complacent, none of them took the trouble to install fortifications. During the rebellion, London was torched and any remaining inhabitants massacred. The aftermath was equally dramatic, as London was transformed from a frontier-trading town into the capital of Roman Britain, with all the features necessary to make it a major administrative, social and economic centre.

90. Reconstruction view of Roman London.
London in the second century AD. The settlement, the largest in Roman Britain, was dominated by the massive Hadrianic forum-basilica.



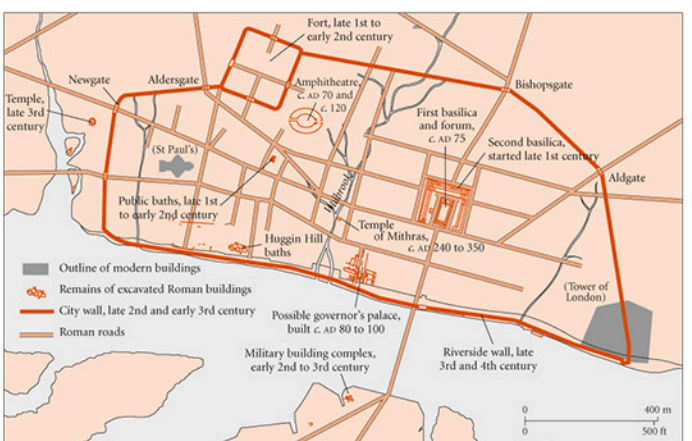
Temporary fortifications were erected and London was rebuilt. The new procurator of the province, Gaius Julius Alpinus Classicianus, was based in London instead of at Colchester. His tombstone has survived, reused in a bastion added to the walls in the late fourth century (see p. 40). His presence marks the time when London emerged as the pre-eminent town in Roman Britain, and we can safely assume that the governor was also based there. A massive building on the site of the present-day Cannon Street station has been tentatively identified as the governor's palace. The fort in the northwest part of the city housed his garrison, and was certainly in existence by the early second century. Its associated amphitheatre had been built by the year 70. The many tiles stamped 'PPBRLON' (see p. 88) show that the Roman government was behind a number of the major public buildings. The city may have been classed as a colony or a *municipium*, but ironically no inscription has ever been found that specifies its formal legal status.

A crucial part of the reconstruction was the installation of public buildings. London received a modest forum and basilica by 85 at the latest. They were soon replaced by a far bigger version on the same site, with a cathedral-sized basilica begun under Hadrian (117–38), and from which the well-known bronze bust of the emperor (see p. 143) may have come. Public baths on Huggin Hill were begun around the same time as the first forum, but there were several other, earlier baths.

Around these great structures houses and shops proliferated, jockeying for position and street frontage. Excavations at No. 1 Poultry have produced evidence for a series of tightly-packed wooden buildings along the street, and this seems to have been typical of much of Roman London in the first and second centuries.

Roman London has produced epic quantities of evidence for commerce from soon after 43. The waterlogged Walbrook (a tributary of the Thames, see [91]) area has preserved wooden writing tablets, for example one recording a slave girl's sale (see p. 226), hundreds of leather shoes, basketry, pewter plates, amber, brooches, and a large number of phallic amulets. Wharf

91. Plan of Roman London.
London's modern streets bear little relation to known Roman streets shown on the plan, though the third-century walls (which incorporated the earlier fort) provided the foundations for the medieval walls.

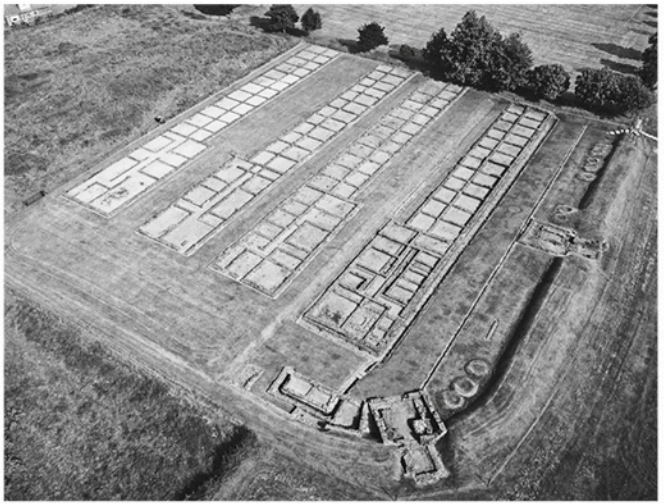


The Legions

Vegetius attributed Roman military success to the brilliance of legionary organization.[4] The legion was commanded by the *legatus legionis*, a man of senatorial status who was literally the 'delegate' of the emperor. The second-in-command was the senior tribune (of the six allocated to the legion), and like his commander was of senatorial rank. Such a man might proceed to his own legionary command, and indeed this was the course followed by Agricola. The other five tribunes were of equestrian rank, and might have been promoted to the position of senior tribune after commanding an auxiliary unit, or serving in a civilian administrative post. For these five, a career as a procurator, or further auxiliary commands, might follow. The *praefectus castrorum*, 'prefect of the camp', was third-in-command. His duties were varied, and ranged from being sent off with a party of troops on fort-building detail, or looking after tools used for carpentry.[5] During the Boudican revolt, the legate and senior tribune of *II Augusta* appear to have been absent, and the *praefectus castrorum*, Poenius Postumus, was left in charge.[6]

Legionaries were Roman citizens. The basic unit was the *centuria*, or 'century', meaning literally '100', but the term was used loosely. On campaign each century had eight tent parties (*contubernia*), with eight men per tent. This makes 64 soldiers, with another 16 men on guard, giving a total of 80 men per century.[7] In a legionary fortress, all of the troops had accommodation. Each barrack block had ten pairs of rooms, one for each *contubernium* [100]. The same arrangement was usually found in auxiliary infantry forts. Each century had a centurion, together with his assistant, the *optio* ('a helper freely chosen').[8] The century also had its own *tesserarius*, who organized the daily comings and goings of troops in the century, and the *custos armorum*, who took care of its equipment.

The centuries were organized into cohorts. The barracks at the Flavian fortress of Inchtuthil show that nine of the ten cohorts had six centuries, while the tenth had five double-centuries, confirmed on an inscription from Lambaesis, in North Africa, that names five *optiones* in the first cohort.[9] Therefore, nine cohorts consisted of 480 men each (4,320 plus 108 centurions and *optiones*), and one had 800 men (plus ten centurions and *optiones*). The latter was called a *milliaria*, derived from the word for 'thousand' and which was just as nominal a term as 'century'. This provides us with a total of 5,120 plus 128 centurions and *optiones*. The doubling of the centuries in the first cohort seems only to have taken place by the late first century. In the fourth century, Vegetius describes the battle order that started with the first cohort to the right, then the second, and so on to the fifth. The sixth cohort had the most recent recruits, and they fought behind the second cohort. The centurion of the first century in the first cohort was known as *primus pilus*, and was the legion's pre-eminent centurion.[10] By the late first century BC, the legion had only 120 cavalry, and this remained the case.[11]



100. Caerleon (Monmouthshire). Legionary barrack blocks at Caerleon (*Isca*) in the northwest corner of the fortress.

So the legion in the late first century AD had around 5,368 men, with an additional number of officers and others (such as doctors), collectively making up a total of around 5,500 men. It is obvious from inscriptions and other references that the actual number on any day varied, due to men on detachment to the governor's guard, sickness, unfilled vacancies and casualties.[12] Moreover, legions were continually being divided into vexillations, or wings. Like almost every administrative unit in human history, the complete legion was usually just a theory.

The Auxiliaries

In his description of the army in AD 23, Tacitus says that the auxiliaries were made up of infantry and cavalry. He added that their total was similar to that of the legions, but that their numbers varied continuously as required, and therefore he could not list them. According to Vegetius, auxiliaries were hired for their range of regional fighting techniques and skills, made vastly more useful to the Romans through discipline and their coordinated use within the Roman army.[13] Auxiliaries were not

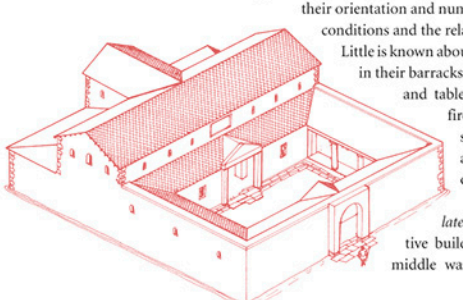


116. Lanchester (Durham). Inscription from the fort at *Longovicium*, recording the restoration of the headquarters and armoury by the First Cohort of Lingones under Marcus Aurelius Quirinus, during the reign of Gordian III (238–44).

117. Housesteads (Northumberland). The *principia*, with its basilican cross-hall and courtyard, was the centre of any fort. The basic design was also used for civilian forum-basilicas.

Britain in the third century, but the number of texts compared to potential buildings is minute, and by this date much of the work recorded was rebuilding or repair work. The barracks of the seventh cohort of the II legion were rebuilt at Caerleon between 255–60, while another seems to have been built afresh at Bainbridge in 205.[57] These are the only epigraphic references to barracks in Britain. At Netherby, a cavalry drill hall was completed in 222, a fact which was recorded on an inscription. The text is particularly interesting in that it describes the work as finishing something that had been begun long before, and which seems to have been suspended.[58] Although the building is itself unknown, a possible example has been identified from a geophysical survey of the remains at Birdoswald.[59] Some time between 238–44 at Lanchester, the headquarters and armoury were restored by the garrison, the First Cohort of Lingones [116].[60] Such texts often tell us about buildings we have no remains of, or that might otherwise defy identification. At High Rochester, two inscriptions refer to *ballistaria* in 220, and in 225–35.[61] Once thought to have been a platform for artillery, a *ballistarium* seems too unimportant to merit a monumental inscription. Perhaps the texts refer to a workshop in the fort that built and maintained artillery equipment.

Excavation has produced the most evidence for fort buildings and, perhaps more importantly, evidence for how fort buildings changed across time. It has also shown that predicting fort plans from limited and selective excavation might overlook local peculiarities. Most of the fort buildings housed troops in uniform barrack blocks, or *centuriae*. Invariably rectangular, barracks usually had ten pairs of rooms in a row, with a large suite tacked on to the end that projected slightly. Although barracks were generally laid out side-by-side in the *praetentura* and *retentura*, their orientation and numbers of rooms depended on local conditions and the relative proportions of the fort plan.



Little is known about the facilities available to soldiers in their barracks, but postholes mark where bunks and tables stood, and hearths the site of fires, while the officers' quarters seem to have been much better-appointed, with latrines and drainage facilities.

The central zone of the fort, the *latera praetorii*, housed administrative buildings and other facilities. In the middle was the headquarters building, or *principia* [117]. Whereas barracks vary in number according to the size of the fort, the *principia* tended to vary in size depending on the prestige of the fort and its unit. The basic layout, however, remained the same. The *principia* had a cross-hall opening into a courtyard, with portico on three sides. The courtyard lay beside the *via Principalis*, and looked down towards the *porta Praetoria*, where parades, sacrifices and other ceremonies took place. The cross-hall was a rectangular chamber that stretched the width of the building. It resembled the town-hall basilica familiar from many Romano-British civic centres, but was usually much smaller in proportion to the size of the fort. Behind the hall, a range of rooms was built to house the unit's records, with the *sacellum* in the middle where the standards were housed. Valuables were secured in a subterranean strongroom, unless the ground was too difficult to excavate. Next to the *principia* was usually the *praetorium*, the commandant's house, usually built as four wings arranged around a courtyard. The hospital, or *valetudinarium*, has been identified at a few sites, for example at Housesteads [118], where it also consisted of four wings ranged round a



118. Housesteads (Northumberland). Aerial view of the fort at Housesteads (*Vercovicium*). In the right foreground, three parallel blocks fill out the northeast corner of the fort. In the left foreground, in the corner, is the latrine. Behind these, from left to right, are the commandant's house, the headquarters with hospital behind, and a pair of granaries. The north wall of the fort, on the right, formed part of Hadrian's Wall and replaced a newly-built stretch of Wall and turret when the decision to build forts on the Wall was made. Originally constructed in the mid-120s.

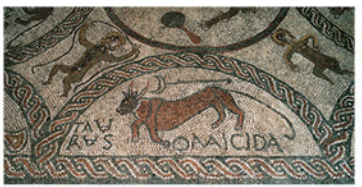
199. Woodchester (Gloucestershire). At just under 15 sq m (162 sq ft) this pavement, recorded by Samuel Lysons (1763–1819), formed the centrepiece of the villa's principal room and is one of the largest known mosaics in Britain and northern Gaul. The figure of Orpheus with his lyre and the parade of animal associates is known from several other mosaics in Britain. About 325–50.

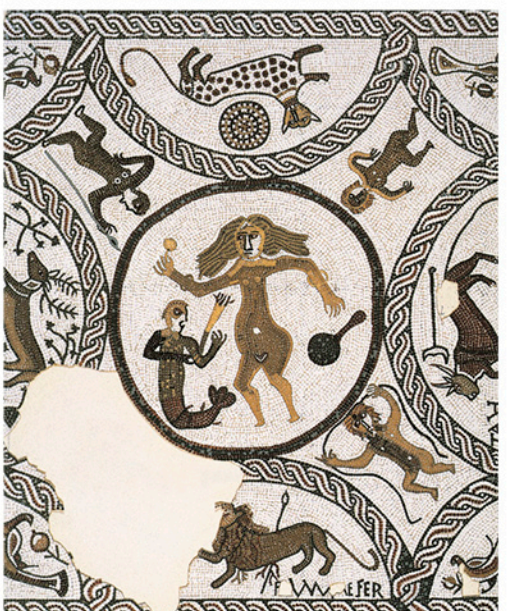
persons of the highest status in Roman Britain. These people could be those descended from the tribal aristocrats of the first century, like Togidubnus, now exhibiting social aspirations and tastes that marked them out as thoroughly Romanized. Even the lesser villas, like Sparsholt (Hampshire) with its single geometric pavement, were clearly lived in by people who aspired to the same kind of lifestyle. Of course, it is also possible that villas were owned or lived in by military veterans, or by immigrants from Gaul or further beyond. Some mosaic floors exhibit unusually exotic tastes. Those at Rudston include details of circus events much more characteristic of mosaics found in North Africa, suggesting that either the mosaicist or the residents had lived there once [200].



The disparaging tone adopted towards Britain by fourth-century observers, such as Ausonius, is easier to explain if the owners of some later villas were at least natives, rather than immigrants.[20] A Gaulish provincial himself, Ausonius stressed his own credentials by looking

200. Rudston (East Yorkshire). Mosaic panel (*below*) from the 'Venus' floor at Rudston. Although scenes from the amphitheatre and circus are well known in North Africa, Rudston is unusual in Britain, raising an interesting question about the ownership of the villa. The detail (*left*) shows an animal identified as a bull ('*TAVRVS*') that is 'man-killing' ('*OMICIDA*'). (Hull Museums).





LATE TREASURE HOARDS

Hoards in Roman Britain
Hoarding was a routine activity in antiquity, and remained so until early modern times. Concealing valuables in times of insecurity, or just for safekeeping, was the best way of hanging onto them. In the normal course of events, hoards were recovered by their owners and do not survive in the record. Those that turn up today, usually found by metal-detectorists or farmers, were left behind, whether through death or forgetfulness.

Thousands of Roman coin hoards have been found all over Britain, the greatest of which is the Frome Hoard, consisting of 52,503 coins dated from AD 253 to 305, and discovered in 2010 (see p. 70 and [65]). The most remarkable series are the treasure hoards from late Roman Britain, several of which come from East Anglia. They seem to belong to the last few years of Roman occupation, or to the years immediately after.

The Mildenhall Treasure
When the Mildenhall Treasure [251] came to light in the 1940s, it was still believed that Roman Britain was far too much of a backwater to have produced such high-quality silver plate. It was even suggested that American airmen might have brought the treasure back from North Africa during World War II. Since then, analysis of other hoards has shown that individuals in late Roman Britain were not only extremely wealthy, but had access to silver and gold plate manufactured to the highest standards available in the ancient world. The treasure included no coins, but the quality and style of its plate suggest that it could have belonged to any wealthy person in the Roman Empire around the end of the fourth century.

The Hoxne Treasure
Understanding the hoards is very difficult since we have no idea who buried them. The Hoxne treasure consists of a number of personalized items of plate, including five silver bowls, four pepper pots, 78 spoons and 20 ladles, as well as around 15,000 gold and silver coins [253]. The coins demonstrate that the assemblage, which was closely packed in its deposit, could not have been buried before 408 and was probably buried shortly afterwards. The value in antiquity would have been enormous, so the possibilities are that this was the property of one or more families, stolen loot, or goods seized by the authorities to pay off barbarians. Another hoard, now lost, was found nearby at Eye in the eighteenth century and may have been another part of the Hoxne assemblage, separated for security.



251. Mildenhall (Suffolk). Found in 1942, this silver treasure hoard consisted of 34 objects, including eight spoons, several bowls, dishes and platters, ladles, and a pair of goblets. The largest of these is the Great Dish (60.5 cm/24 in wide), with its Bacchic figures and Oceanus central motif. Despite the pagan associations, educated Christians in the late Empire were quite at ease with pagan imagery. Probably fourth century. (British Museum).

The Thetford Treasure
The Thetford treasure falls into a completely different category. Stylistically the material belongs to the very late fourth century, and coins that may have originally formed part of the hoard date up to 388. Superficially the hoard seems divided into two parts: the gold jewelry and the silver spoons. The jewelry includes a gold belt buckle [252] and 22 gold rings, into which much older gemstones had been set. A number of the spoons were engraved with personal names, while other words referring to drinking, along with a wine strainer, suggest that the spoons may have been associated with a late Roman pagan cult of Faunus, an obscure ancient woodland deity. Unfortunately, we have no idea if the original owners buried the hoard, if it had been acquired by someone else, or if the cult was active in Britain or Gaul, which is where some of the items are thought to have been made.

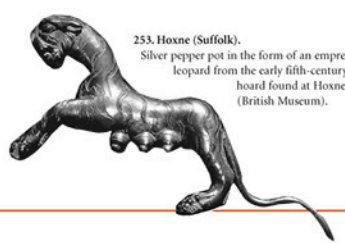


252. Thetford (Norfolk). A gold buckle depicting a satyr. Part of the treasure hoard associated with the cult of Faunus. (British Museum).



Other hoards
These are by no means the only treasure hoards of this late date. The Corbridge silver lanx is the only surviving piece of a treasure that was broken up and lost soon after its discovery in the 1730s. The Risley Park silver lanx (see p. 253) has survived, but only as a cast made from the fragments into which it was cut after its discovery. Other treasures include the collection of late Roman silver spoons found at Canterbury.

Overall, the late treasure hoards are an extremely important witness to the quality of material culture available to the élite in late Roman Britain. Their survival is remarkable, but it is probable that the goods themselves were considerably less remarkable at the time. Roman Britain's upper classes had access to bullion goods of outstanding quality that would have compared with the best the Roman Empire had to offer.



253. Hoxne (Suffolk). Silver pepper pot in the form of an empress and a silver leopard from the early fifth-century treasure hoard found at Hoxne. (British Museum).

VISITING ROMAN BRITAIN

For detailed guidance on how to visit Roman Britain there is no substitute for Roger Wilson's *Guide to the Roman Remains in Britain* (2002). This marvellously indispensable pocket-sized volume includes excellent descriptions of sites and museums, made all the more useful with detailed directions on how to get to any one, including guiding the reader through a provincial town or across the hills of Northumberland. The book also provides all opening times and contact details, particularly useful in the winter. However, at the time of writing (2013) the book is still only available in its 2002 manifestation, so readers are urged to check access details with any site before making a special journey.

Compared to the rest of the Roman Empire, Britain has relatively unimpressive Roman monuments. The ravages of a northern maritime climate and a lack of durable building stone in the south haven't helped, but it has really been Britain's exceptionally varied history and explosive development that have put paid to so much of what the Romans left behind. Tantalizing descriptions from the Middle Ages and even early modern times can only make us wonder at what we have lost.

However, most of Roman Britain's principal towns are represented by **museum collections**. Undoubtedly the most varied collection is in the **Museum of London**, but other highly recommended museums are to be found at **Cirencester**, **Colchester**, **Exeter**, **Gloucester**, **Leicester**, **Peterborough** (for Water Newton), **Reading** (for Silchester), **St Albans** and **Wroxeter**.

As far as the physical remains of **towns** are concerned the most instructive site today is probably **Caerwent** in South Wales. Small and insignificant in its own time, this diminutive *civitas* capital today has the only example of a basilica and forum open to visitors as well as a temple, townhouses and magnificent defences. **Wroxeter**'s baths and baths-basilica are some of the most upstanding remains of any Roman town, as is **Leicester**'s Jewry Wall, once part of the town baths and now forming a backdrop to the museum. Other sites have their own individual appeal. **St Albans** has its theatre, the only one visitable in any coherent form today, while **Silchester** and **Caistor by Norwich** have the only defences that can be walked round in their entirety. But it is also worth mentioning **Lincoln**'s remarkable basilican rear wall, and city gates, **London**'s amphitheatre by the Guildhall, as well as **Dorchester**'s townhouse.

Despite the fact that Roman Britain is known to have had considerably more than a thousand significant rural houses, most of which might reasonably be called **villas**, little more than a few are exposed to public view today. The most interesting of all is at **Lullingstone**, a short distance from the village of Eynsford in Kent and not far from the M20/M25 junction. This remarkably compact house is only one of two in Britain to enjoy the luxury of a complete cover building and features an upper storey so that visitors can appreciate the mosaic pavement that dominates the middle of the building. Lullingstone's cover building has been renovated and now features an audiovisual presentation of the house's history.

The other villa house to be so equipped is at **Brading** in the Isle of Wight. Remarkable for its array of sophisticated mosaic floors it is perhaps most easily compared with **Bignor**, not so very far away in West Sussex. Bignor's beautiful floors are now displayed under a series of early nineteenth-century huts which give little sense of the building's original appearance but which make for a charming visit. A trip to Bignor is best combined with the remarkable, and unique, site at **Fishbourne** not far away and close to Chichester. Fishbourne of course includes the unparalleled early series of mosaics laid in the palace that has been traditionally identified as the home of the client king Tiberius Claudius Togidubnus. Of other villas in Roman Britain the other most important sites that can be seen today are probably **Chedworth** and **Great Witcombe**, not far from one another in the Cotswolds. Chedworth is extremely popular but its visitor centre, museum and mosaics make for an extremely interesting place to visit. There is far less to see at Great Witcombe but the beauty of the setting makes for a reminder that villa owners chose the places for their houses carefully.

Villas and towns aside, Britain boasts a unique Roman site in the form of the spa baths and temple complex at **Bath**. The baths themselves form a magnificent centrepiece to the site but visitors today now also have an opportunity to walk through the dramatic subterranean remains of the temple precinct. The finds on display include the temple's pediment sculptures as well as curse tablets and other offerings from the sacred spring.

It is the **Roman army** in Britain though that has left the greatest quantity of physical remains, even in the south. The late shore 'forts' at **Richborough**, **Pevensey** and **Portchester** all survive to considerable heights, the latter two because they were used by the Normans as castle walls. **Dover** had a fort too, though now just a fragment is visible. Here the most astonishing survival is the lighthouse in the grounds of Dover Castle, once a member of a pair that guided ships into this key Roman port.

Further north and west, the **forts and fortresses** of Roman Britain remain the most potent reminders of this island's Roman past. In South Wales the II legion's fortress at **Caerleon** has not only barracks, defences and a fine museum, but also a complete amphitheatre. **Chester**, home to the XX legion, has half an amphitheatre, impressive defences and an equally remarkable museum as well as a shrine to Minerva still visible in its original location nearby across the river.

Of Roman **York** relatively little is visible apart from some of the defences, but the museum is one of the most important in the country. It is further to the north that the really exciting sites are now. On the west coast in Cumbria the museum at **Maryport** contains an important collection of Roman altars from the fort, and further south at **Ravenglass** is one of the most upstanding pieces of a Roman building in Britain – the fort bath-house. To the east in Hardknott Pass is **Hardknott fort**, still with defences and some of its buildings, erected to control the route across the hills.

To the east the alpha sites have to be **Wallsend** and **South Shields**. With pioneering zeal and foresight the archaeologists and local authority here have done extraordinary things and erected magnificent replicated buildings to add to the excellent museums. South Shields now has a wonderful replicated gate, commandant's house and barracks, while Wallsend has a complete working Roman baths suite.

Nothing, however, can compare with the remains of the **Roman frontiers** themselves. In Scotland the weathered turf **Antonine Wall** is of comparatively limited appeal but the **Hunterian Museum** in Glasgow and the **Museum of Scotland** in Edinburgh, at either end of the Wall, more than make up for that. **Hadrian's Wall** is a different matter. Although much has been destroyed, and none stands to its original height, the forts of the central sector and some of the Wall that connected them at **Chesters**, **Carrawburgh**, **Housesteads** and **Birdoswald** can all be visited today and appreciated as magnificent testimony to the power of the Romans. Since 2003 the 135-km/84-mile long Hadrian's Wall Path National Trail has made it possible for enthusiasts to make their way from one end of the Wall, now a World Heritage Site, to the other.

Not far to the rear is the extraordinary site of **Vindolanda**, with one of the richest collections of any in the country. So it is only appropriate here to mention the **British Museum**, which houses Vindolanda's writing tablets. As the principal collection of finds it is without parallel. Here are the Thetford, Hoxne, Mildenhall and Water Newton treasures as well as Lullingstone's main finds: the Christian paintings and the marble busts, alongside a host of other material and set beside the remains of prehistoric Britain and post-Roman Britain – a reminder that the 360 years of Britain's time as a Roman province was just one episode in her rich and turbulent history.



260. Caerleon (Monmouthshire). The remains of the amphitheatre outside the southwest corner of the legionary fortress walls form one of the most impressive relics of Britain's Roman past and can be visited at any time. Gladiatorial bouts and military displays took place here.