



Romans, Britain and invasion

By Michael Coleman

NARRATOR: In the year 43 AD Britain was invaded by a people known as 'the Romans'. The Romans ruled Britannia, as they called it, for over 365 years – until 410 AD. By then, the Britons and Romans had got pretty used to each other...

BRITISH ROMAN: My ancestors were Britons – but now I'm a British Roman!

ROMAN BRITON: My ancestors were Romans – but now I'm a Roman Briton!

NARRATOR: So why aren't the Romans still ruling Britain? How did Britain change under Roman rule? Why did they come to Britain in the first place? And...who were the Romans, anyway?

Rome was a magnificent city in the country of Italy...and it still is! The people who lived and worked there – that is, the citizens of Rome – had made it the centre of the greatest civilisation of the day.

The Romans put their success down to the many gods and goddesses they worshipped. Nothing was too small to have a god caring for it. For example, Janus was the god of doorways. He had two faces, so that he could look both in and out! But the king of the gods was Jupiter – the god of storms and thunder...and the Romans believed that Jupiter had promised...

JUPITER: Worship us and we will protect you against your enemies. You will rule the world for ever!

NARRATOR: With their powerful and clever army the Romans conquered, then began to rule, country after country. This group of countries was called The Roman Empire – and by the year 55 BC the famous general, Julius Caesar, was in charge of it all...



History Clips: The Romans

- CAESAR: Ah. My new map of the Roman Empire. With all the lands we've conquered coloured in red, I hope.
- FLUNKY: Yes, Caesar. Blood-red.
- CAESAR: Now, let me see. Ooh, look at it. Europe, North Africa, Asia – all red! But what's that bit? That funny-looking island?
- FLUNKY: That's Britannia, Caesar.
- CAESAR: But it's not coloured red. It's messing up my map. Why isn't it coloured red?
- FLUNKY: Because we haven't conquered it yet, Caesar.
- CAESAR: Hmmph. We'll see about that!
- NARRATOR: So, in 55 BC, the Romans invaded Britain for the first time. About one of his earlier wars, Julius Caesar had famously said:
- CAESAR: I came, I saw, I conquered!
- NARRATOR: Well about this invasion he should have said...
- CAESAR: I came, I saw, I went home!
- NARRATOR: Julius Caesar, a man so vain he sometimes wore a laurel wreath in his portraits to hide his bald head, had invaded Britain just to make himself popular in Rome. A year later, in 54 BC, he was back again.
- CAESAR: I came again, I saw again and then I went home – again!
- NARRATOR: After fighting a few small battles, helping a local king and taking some hostages, Julius Caesar and the Romans had waved Britannia goodbye. For nearly 100 years, that's the way it stayed. How did the Britons get on during that period?



- NARRATOR:** Well, they did do a lot of peaceful stuff like raising animals and growing crops. The Britons had discovered iron, too, so they spent time making things like pots...and...swords! Which they regularly used on each other!
- BRITON #1:** Our tribe's better than your tribe!
- BRITON #2:** Oh no, it isn't! Our king says your tribe's tripe!
- BRITON #1:** Then your tribe's in trouble! Take that!
- NARRATOR:** The ancient Britons lived in tribes, a bit like gangs, and neighbouring tribes often fought each other. It's thought that there were about thirty tribes in Britain all together.

