

BRITISH TRIBES

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Introduction

Since the Britons themselves (who, along with much of Western Europe, spoke Celtic languages) left no literary record, their tribal names have come from Roman sources.



- 1: Caledonia, 2: Damnonii, 3: Novantae, 4: Selgovae,
5: Votadini, 6: Carvetii, 7: Brigantes, 8: Parisi,
9: Deceangli, 10: Ordovices, 11: Demetae, 12: Silures,
13: Cornovii, 14: Corieltaui, 15: Dobunni, 16: Durotriges,
17: Dumnonii, 18: Iceni, 19: Catuvellauni, 20: Trinovantes,
21: Cantii, 22: Atrebates, 23: Belgae, 24: Regni.

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Occasionally, a tribe can have the same, or a very similar, name as another. This, in itself, cannot be taken as an indication that the tribes are related. With names that can be translated along the lines of: 'hill dwellers', 'people of the horn', 'hunters', etc., similarities are to be expected. For administrative purposes, those parts of Roman Britain which were not under direct military control, were divided into 'civitates' (singular: 'civitas') - the equivalent of counties. A civitas was usually based on an existing tribal division, and retained the name of the tribe concerned.

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Ptolemy's Map

In his 'Geography', of c.AD150, Greco-Egyptian mathematician, astronomer and geographer, Claudius Ptolemaeus (c.100-c.170), known as Ptolemy, produced a set of coordinates which allow a rudimentary map of the world as he knew it to be drawn. Britain's shape (seen on the right) is actually very distorted on this map - the North skewing wildly eastwards. Ptolemy gives a description of the layout of tribal territories within Britain, and names and coordinates for a number of towns - regardless of size or sophistication, he calls them all 'poleis' (singular 'polis'), literally 'cities' - which he allocates to the appropriate tribe. The following extract demonstrates the format:



"Below the peoples we have mentioned, but more toward the west are the Demetae [11], whose towns are: Luentinum [probably Pumsaint] and Maridunum [Carmarthen]. More toward the east are the Silures [12] whose town is Bullaeum [probably Usk]. Next to these are the Dobuni [15], and their town Corinium [Cirencester]. Then the Atrebati [22] and their town: Caleva [Silchester]. Next to these, but farther eastward, are the Cantii [21] ..."

Though Ptolemy was writing in the mid-2nd century, the bulk of his data was considerably older. He drew extensively on the work of one Marinus of Tyre, who was probably working in the years about AD100. In the case of Britain, most of the details (presumably originating in military maps) would seem to date from the 70s and 80s, though the location of the 6th Legion (VI Victrix Pia Fidelis), at Eboracum (York), clearly came from a much later source - they did not arrive in Britain until c.122.

In c. AD98, Roman historian Tacitus wrote the following:

"Who were the original inhabitants of Britain, whether they were indigenous or foreign, is as usual among barbarians, little known. Their physical characteristics are various, and from these conclusions may be drawn. The red hair and large limbs of the inhabitants of Caledonia [1] point clearly to a German origin. The dark complexion of the Silures [12], their usually curly hair, and the fact that Spain is the opposite shore to them, are an evidence that Iberians of a former date crossed over and occupied these parts..."

Previously, Tacitus had stated:

"Britain, the largest of the islands which Roman geography includes, is so situated that it faces Germany on the east, Spain on the west; on the south it is even within sight of Gaul; its northern extremities, which have no shores opposite to them, are beaten by the waves of a vast open sea."

'Agricola' Chapter 10

Later, he mentions:

"... Ireland, being between Britain and Spain ..."
'Agricola' Chapter 24

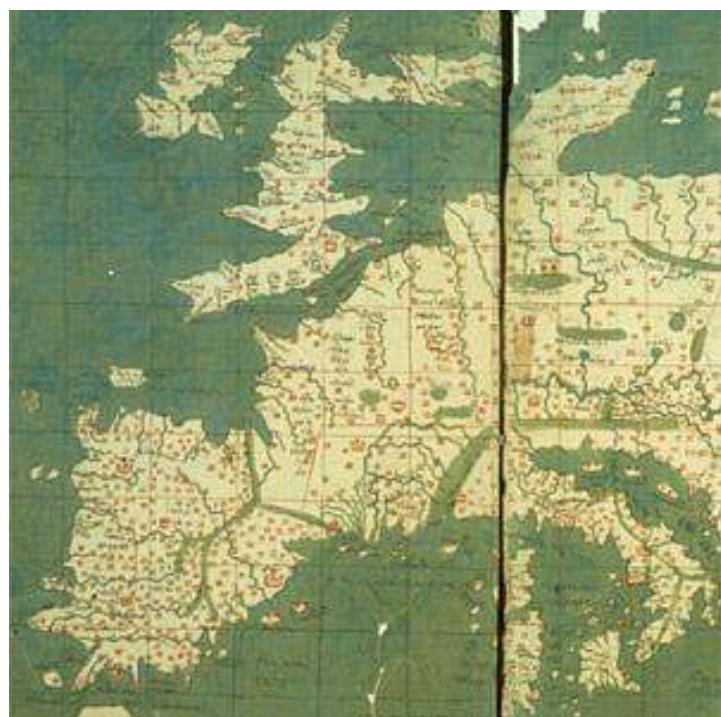
The notion that Britain's west coast faced towards Spain, with Ireland in-between, is a recurring misconception. It was the opinion of Julius Caesar, and appears to be achieved by imagining that the coast of Gaul ran in a virtually straight line from the Pyrenees to the Rhine - in effect, rotating the British Isles, in an anti-clockwise direction, towards Spain.

The map on the right was produced, to Ptolemy's specification, in the 15th century. (The earliest surviving manuscripts of Ptolemy's 'Geography' date from c.1300. All surviving manuscripts seem to descend from a common ancestor, which was at some remove from Ptolemy's original.)

For all its very obvious flaws, Ptolemy's map places Britain, Ireland and Spain in rather more familiar positions than those suggested by Tacitus. Nevertheless, some two and a half centuries after Ptolemy, Orosius notes that:

"... the Ocean has islands which are called Britain and Ireland and which are located opposite the Gauls in the general direction of Spain ... Britain, an island in the Ocean, extends for a long distance northward; to the south, it has the Gauls... Ireland, an island located between Britain and Spain, extends at greater length from south to north."

'Historiarum Adversus Paganos Libri Septem' Book I Chapter 2



".... Those who are nearest to the Gauls are also like them, either from the permanent influence of original descent, or, because in countries which run out so far to meet each other, climate has produced similar physical qualities. But a general survey inclines me to believe that the Gauls established themselves in an island so near to them. Their religious belief may be traced in the strongly-marked British superstition. The language differs but little; there is the same boldness in challenging danger, and, when it is near, the same timidity in shrinking from it. The Britons, however, exhibit more spirit, as being a people whom a long peace has not yet enervated. Indeed we have understood that even the Gauls were once renowned in war; but, after a while, sloth following on ease crept over them, and they lost their courage along with their freedom. This too has happened to the long-conquered tribes of Britain; the rest are still what the Gauls once were."

"Their strength is in infantry. Some tribes fight also with the chariot. The higher in rank is the charioteer; the dependants fight. They were once ruled by kings, but are now divided under chieftains into factions and parties. Our greatest advantage in coping with tribes so powerful is that they do not act in concert. Seldom is it that two or three states meet together to ward off a common danger. Thus, while they fight singly, all are conquered. Their sky is obscured by continual rain and cloud. Severity of cold is unknown. The [summer] days exceed in length those of our part of the world; the nights are bright, and in the extreme north so short that between sunlight and dawn you can perceive but a slight distinction. It is said that, if there are no clouds in the way, the splendour of the sun can be seen throughout the night, and that he does not rise and set, but only passes along [the horizon]. The truth is, that the low shadow thrown from the flat extremities of the earth's surface does not raise the darkness to any height, and the night thus fails to reach the sky and stars. With the exception of the olive, the

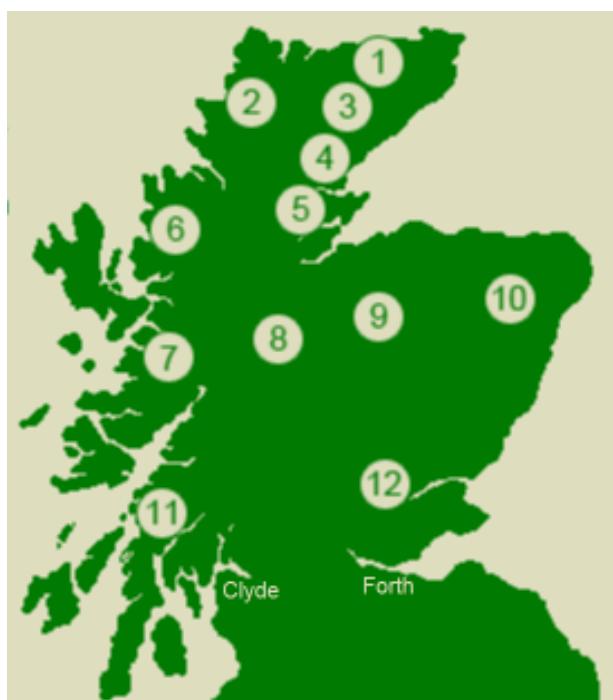
vine and other plants which usually grow in warmer climates, the soil will yield all ordinary produce, and is rich in cattle. Crops ripen slowly, but are quick to sprout, the cause in each case being the same, namely, the abundant moisture of the earth and sky. Britain contains gold and silver and other metals, as the prize of conquest. The ocean, too, produces pearls, but of a dusky and bluish hue. Some think that those who collect them have not the requisite skill, as in the Red Sea the living and breathing oyster is torn from the rocks, while in Britain they are gathered just as they are thrown up. I could myself more readily believe that the natural properties of the pearls are in fault than our keenness for gain.

"The Britons themselves bear cheerfully the conscription, the taxes, and the other burdens imposed on them by the Empire, if there be no oppression. Of this they are impatient; they are reduced to subjection, not as yet to slavery."

'Agricola' Chapters 11-13

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1: Caledonia



- 1: Cornovii, 2: Caereni, 3: Smertae, 4: Lugi,
5: Decantae, 6: Carnonacae, 7: Creones, 8: Caledonii,
9: Vacomagi, 10: Taexali, 11: Epidii, 12: Venicones

Northern Scotland (as it is called today), i.e. beyond the line of the Forth and Clyde estuaries, was never fully brought under Roman occupation. Ptolemy lists twelve tribes living in this country. (His list, though, may well be incomplete.) From his description, it is possible to, very approximately, map their territories (see right). The Caledonii appear as a particular tribe, living in the vicinity of the Great Glen. From Tacitus, however, it is evident that the term Caledonia was used, in a generalized way, to refer to the whole land-mass north of the Forth-Clyde line. He says that previous writers had compared the shape of Britain:

"... to an elongated shoulder-blade or an axe. And this no doubt is its shape without Caledonia, so that it has become the popular description of the whole island. However, if you

cross [into Caledonia] there is a large and irregular tract of land which juts out from its furthest shores, tapering off in a wedge-like form."

'Agricola' Chapter 10

Because of the narrowness of the strip of land between Forth and Clyde, Tacitus remarks that the country beyond:

"... might be called another island."

'Agricola' Chapter 23

He was of the opinion that:

"The red hair and large limbs of the inhabitants of Caledonia point clearly to a German origin."

'Agricola' Chapter 11

Tacitus reports that Gnaeus Julius Agricola (governor of Britain AD77-84) routed the combined forces of the Caledonian tribes, at the battle of Mons Graupius in 83, then:

"... led his army down into the territory of the Boresti."

'Agricola' Chapter 38

Although there is speculation, the whereabouts of Mons Graupius and the "territory of the Boresti" remain unknown. The Boresti are the only Caledonian tribe named by Tacitus. Their mention in the 'Agricola' is the only record of their existence, and it has been suggested that they are actually the product of a textual corruption. Agricola also had his fleet circumnavigate Caledonia, which confirmed to Roman satisfaction that Britain was indeed an island. No doubt data collected during the voyage would eventually furnish Ptolemy with his source material for the North.

A number of forts (often called 'glen-blocking forts') had been built along the edge of the Highland massif (a line which runs from the Clyde to Stonehaven), and, at Inchtuthil in Perthshire, construction of the most northerly legionary fortress of the Empire was underway, when, in 87, there was an abrupt change of plan. One of Britain's four legions was withdrawn for service on the Danube. The, still unfinished, fortress was dismantled and the Romans vacated Caledonia. They apparently maintained a presence in, what is now, southern Scotland for a few more years, but by about 105 they had retreated to the Tyne-Solway line. Emperor Hadrian visited Britain in 122, and ordered the construction of a frontier wall, Hadrian's Wall, along this line. In 142 the Romans reoccupied southern Scotland, and another wall, the Antonine Wall, was built across the Forth-Clyde isthmus. The Antonine Wall defined the Empire's frontier for twenty-odd years, before the Romans were obliged to withdraw to Hadrian's Wall.

A final attempt to bring the whole of Britain into the Empire was made in 208, when Septimius Severus personally led an army into Caledonia. In 211, Severus died, at York, without having achieved a decisive result. His son and successor, Caracalla, had no enthusiasm for the campaign, and abandoned his father's gains. Hadrian's Wall was again, and finally, the frontier of the Empire.

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2: Damnonii, 3: Novantae, 4: Selgovae, 5:Votadini

The Damnonii, Novantae, Selgovae and Votadini are the tribes placed by Ptolemy in, what would today be called, southern Scotland (and a small area of northern England) - the territory between two 'lines': the Forth-Clyde and the Tyne-Solway, which, at different times, acted as the Empire's frontier. The **Votadini [5]** would seem to have occupied the whole eastern side of this region. In the Clyde valley and Ayrshire, were the **Damnonii [2]**. (Their name could also be spelled Dumnonii, but there is

no reason to suspect a connection between this tribe and the **Dumnonii** [17] of the far south-west of England.) South of the Damnonii, in Dumfries and Galloway, were the **Novantae** [3]. The **Selgovae** [4] - their name is believed to mean 'hunters' - occupied the centre of the region.

In AD78, Gnaeus Julius Agricola (governor of Britain 77-84) began his campaigns in the north of the island. By the end the campaigning season of 79, the tribes of southern Scotland had been conquered. Agricola recognized the Forth-Clyde line's potential as a frontier, and he spent the next year consolidating his gains up to that line. Beyond the Forth-Clyde was **Caledonia** [1]. Agricola won a major victory over the combined Caledonian tribes (at Mons Graupius), in 83, before being recalled to Rome. The Empire's priorities, however, lay elsewhere. A legion was withdrawn from Britain, and, in 87, the Romans abandoned Caledonia. They continued to occupy forts in southern Scotland, but it seems that by c.105 these too were abandoned (perhaps as the result of hostilities), and the Romans withdrew to the Tyne-Solway line. The Tyne-Solway frontier was formalized by the construction of Hadrian's Wall - ordered by the emperor Hadrian, on a visit to Britain, in 122. In 142, however, on the instructions of Antoninus Pius (who had succeeded Hadrian in 138), the Romans retook southern Scotland. A new frontier wall, the Antonine Wall, was built across the Forth-Clyde isthmus. Southern Scotland was occupied for twenty-odd years, before the Romans were, again, obliged to pull back to the Tyne-Solway line (see: At the Empire's Edge).

In 208, Septimius Severus began a campaign in Caledonia, but, after his death (in 211, at York), Hadrian's Wall once more, and finally, became the frontier of the Empire. Although they were beyond the frontier of Rome, the tribes of southern Scotland (they are often referred to as 'the tribes between the walls') were not beyond the influence of Rome. Several outposts to the north of Hadrian's Wall were garrisoned - the area being, in effect, a buffer zone between the 'barbarian' North and civilized Roman Britain.

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6: Carvetii, 7: Brigantes, 8:Parisi

The **Brigantes** [7] occupied most of northern England. "Extending to both seas", notes Ptolemy. "Said to be the most populous in the entire province", remarks Tacitus ('Agricola' Chapter 17). The Tyne would seem to have been their north-eastern limit, whilst in the north-west their territory may well have extended above the Solway, into Scotland - in which case, some of the Brigantes would have been cut-off from their fellows when the emperor Hadrian ordered his Wall to be built across Britain, along the Tyne-Solway line, in 122 (see: At the Empire's Edge). Their southern boundary appears to have dipped down from the line of the Humber and Mersey to include the Peak District.

Brigantia, presumably patron goddess of the Brigantes, is known from seven inscriptions. Six of these were found in northern England, but the seventh came from the Roman outpost, beyond Hadrian's Wall, at Birrens (Dumfries and Galloway, Scotland). In two inscriptions she is equated with the Roman goddess Victoria - her name appearing in coupled form: 'Victoria Brigantia'. In the example from Birrens - an altar set up by 'Amandus the architect' - she is just named Brigantia, and is depicted with the attributes of Minerva Victrix

The statuette of Brigantia (right) was found, at Birrens, in 1731. It is now in the National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh.

The name Brigantes means 'high ones' or 'hill dwellers'. Ptolemy locates a tribe of the same name around Wexford, in south-eastern Ireland. There was also a tribe called the Brigantii in the Alps - their town of Brigantium is now Bregenz, Austria. There was another Brigantium (now La Coruña) in north-western Spain, which suggests that there was a group named the Brigantes/Brigantii there too.



The British Brigantes are generally thought to have been a federation of smaller tribal groups (often called 'septs'). Ptolemy, for instance, places a "port of the Setantii" on the Lancashire coast, in the vicinity of Fleetwood, and a "bay of the Gabrantovices" on the North Yorkshire coast. There is epigraphic evidence for groups called the Textoverdi and the Corionototae in the Tyne valley.

An altar stone (to a goddess whose name is not entirely clear, but may be Saitada), set up by the "curia [council] of the Textoverdi", was found at Beltingham, on the South Tyne, a couple of miles from the Roman fort of Vindolanda and its vicus (where the altar may have originally stood).

A dozen or so miles further down the Tyne valley is Hexham. In 1725 an inscribed stone was found built into the Anglo-Saxon crypt of Hexham Abbey. The actual stone is long lost, but its inscription was recorded. It states that:

"Quintus Calpurnius Concessinius, Prefect of Cavalry, after a slaughter of a band of Corionototae, fulfills his vow to the god of most potent power."

Though the stone was found at Hexham, it was almost certainly robbed from the Roman site at Corbridge, some three miles downstream from Hexham.

In the 'Antonine Itinerary' ('Iter I' of the British section) Roman Corbridge is called Corstopitum (manuscript variants being: Corstopilum, Costopitum, Costopitu, Cor Stopitu), but this, since it has no credible Celtic language derivation, must be a corruption. There have been several attempts to correct it: Corsopitum (proposed by Sir Ian Richmond, 1958); Coriosopitum (favoured by A.L.F Rivet & C. Smith, 1979); Corioritum (suggested by J.G.F Hind, 1980). Since 1973, however, hundreds of writing tablets (slivers of wood, written on with pen and ink), dating from around 85 to 130, have been excavated at Vindolanda. It has become apparent from these that Roman Corbridge was known simply as Coria. The Celtic word 'coria' (it is related to, the Latin, 'curia', as in "curia of the Textoverdi" above) probably means 'hosting-place' - indicating a tribal centre. In the, famously garbled, 'Ravenna Cosmography' appears, apparently in the right sort of geographical vicinity, Corielopocarium or Corie Lopocarium. This entry might represent Coria compounded with a tribal name. Equally, it might not be that at all, but the notion that a Brigantian sept, called the Lopocares, was based at Corbridge (as indicated by S.S. Frere in 1983) is now well established.

Ptolemy assigns a 'polis' called Coria to the Brigantes' northern neighbours, the **Votadini** [5], but not to the Brigantes themselves. Corbridge is on the north bank of the Tyne, and could have been in Votadinian territory until the connection was severed by Hadrian's Wall, which stands about 2 1/2 miles to the north.

In about AD49, Publius Ostorius Scapula, governor of Britain (47-52), was obliged to abandon a campaign in, what is now, Wales to deal with altercations amongst the Brigantes. Tacitus reports:

"The Brigantian rising, it is true, subsided on the execution of a handful of men, who were beginning hostilities, and the pardon of the rest ..."
'Annals' Book XII Chapter 32

The Brigantes were ruled by Queen Cartimandua. Her capital was possibly the massive earthwork complex at Stanwick, North Yorkshire. She may well have been one of the eleven British 'kings' who, according to the reconstructed inscription of his triumphal arch, surrendered to Claudius in 43 (see: Invasion). At any rate, Cartimandua was an ally of the Romans, a 'client ruler'. In 51, when the British resistance leader Caratacus sought her protection, she cemented her relationship with Rome by handing him over in chains.

"Since the capture of Caratacus, however, the Briton with the best knowledge of the art of war was Venutius, whose Brigantian extraction has been mentioned earlier. He had long been loyal, and had received the protection of the Roman arms during his married life with Queen

Cartimandua: then had come a divorce, followed by immediate war, and he had extended his hostility to ourselves [i.e. the Romans]."

'Annals' Book XII Chapter 40

The feud between Cartimandua and Venutius rumbled on for several years - she managing to retain her position thanks to Roman intervention. She alienated her subjects by taking her erstwhile husband's squire as her new husband and co-ruler. In 69 (the Year of the Four Emperors), when the Romans were preoccupied with civil war, Venutius launched an attack, and, although Roman forces managed to rescue Cartimandua, he captured the kingdom. In 71, the first task undertaken by, new governor, Quintus Petillius Cerialis (71-73) was to sort out the Brigantes:

"There were many battles, some by no means bloodless, and his conquests, or at least his wars, embraced a large part of the territory of the Brigantes."

'Agricola' Chapter 17

The legionary fortress of Eboracum (York) is presumed to have been founded at this time, and it has been established (by Dendrochronology) that timbers from the first Roman fort at Luguvalium (Carlisle) were felled in the winter of 72/73. What happened to Cartimandua and Venutius is not recorded, but Tacitus implies (or rather, Chapter 20 of his 'Agricola' is traditionally interpreted as implying) that it was not until the second campaigning season of his father-in-law, Gnaeus Julius Agricola (governor of Britain 77-84), i.e. in 78, that Rome's grip on all the Brigantes' territory was fully secured.

Later - in the aftermath of Hadrian's British visit of 122 seems likely - a civitas was established amongst the Brigantes. Its capital, Isurium Brigantum, is now Aldborough, North Yorkshire. Mid-2nd century Greek traveler and geographer, Pausanias, in his 'Description of Greece', makes a passing comment that Antoninus Pius (ruled 138-161):

"... annexed the greater part of the territory of the Brigantes in Britain, because the Brigantes started an invasion of Genounia, which is subject to Rome."

'Description of Greece' Book VIII Chapter 43

Unfortunately, Pausanias' remark does not make much sense. The whereabouts of "Genounia" is unknown, and it must be suspected that he has in some way confused the British Brigantes and the previously mentioned Brigantii, in the Alpine region, who had neighbours called the Genauni. Nevertheless, commemorative coins, issued 154-5 and depicting a dismayed looking Britannia, do point to a Roman victory in Britain. Possibly the gist is that the civitas had been attacked by external Brigantian septs, but, given its garbled nature, various interpretations can be imposed upon the remark.

The **Carvetii [6]**, whose name probably means 'deer men', inhabited today's Cumbria. They were not listed by Ptolemy, and, at the time he produced his 'Geography' (mid-2nd century AD), they may well have been a sept of the Brigantes. However, they are known to have been a distinct civitas from inscriptions on a tombstone (now lost) and two milestones. The earliest milestone, found at Langwathby, near Penrith, in 1993, carries a dedication to the emperor Alexander Severus (222-235), so, clearly, the civitas had to have been established by then. Luguvalium (Carlisle) is presumed to have been its capital.

Living in, what is now, East Yorkshire, were the **Parisi [8]**. Ptolemy assigns them only one town, Petuaria, which is presumed to have been the civitas capital. Petuaria was probably located at the village of Brough, on the River Humber. In 1937, excavations at Brough uncovered an inscribed stone. It records the donation of a new theatre stage (proscenium) by an 'aedile' - a class of magistrate normally found in a civitas capital - of Petuaria. The inscription dates from between 140 and 144, during the reign of Antoninus Pius (138-161), in whose honour the donation had been made.

It would seem reasonable to assume that the 'civitas Parisorum' was constituted about the same time as the 'civitas Brigantum' - during Hadrian's reign (117-138), sometime after his visit to Britain of 122. There are, however, nagging doubts over the identification of the site at Brough with Petuaria. The inscribed stone was actually found incorporated into the fabric of a later (early-4th century) building. Presumably the theatre, and hence Petuaria, was in the vicinity, but excavations suggest that Brough was a military base, rather than a civitas capital.

There was also a tribe called the Parisi in Gaul (after whom the French capital is named). Whilst a shared name does not necessarily indicate a link between the two tribes, in this case there is a more tangible reason for suspecting a connection. The area of Britain where Ptolemy indicates the Parisi lived - between the Humber and the North York Moors - is also the area where the distinctive, Iron Age, 'Arras culture' burial practices are found - practices which have parallels in Europe, but are almost unique in Britain (see: A Way of Death).

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9: Deceangli, 10: Ordovices, 11: Demetae, 12: Silures

The Deceangli, Ordovices, Silures and Demetae were tribes who occupied the area of Britain which is now Wales. Ptolemy records the **Demetae [11]** in the south-west and the **Silures [12]** in the south-east, but the rest of Wales he assigns to the **Ordovices [10]** (though the Llyn peninsula would appear to have been populated by a group called the Gangani, since he names it "promontory of the Gangani"). Not mentioned by Ptolemy are the **Deceangli [9]**. In about AD49, Publius Ostorius Scapula, governor of Britain (47-52), marched against the Deceangli. Actually, Tacitus, who reports the event in his 'Annals', calls the tribe "the Decangi", but inscriptions on lead ingots suggest it should really be Deceangli. Either way:

*"The country was devastated, booty collected everywhere, while the enemy declined to risk a battle, or, if he made a stealthy attempt to harass the marching columns, found his treachery punished. And now Ostorius was within measurable distance of the sea which looks towards Ireland, when an outbreak of sedition among the **Brigantes [7]** recalled a leader who was firm in his resolution to attempt new conquests only when he had secured the old."*

'Annals' Book XII Chapter 32

The name Deceangli has survived as Tegeingl, a district of north-eastern Wales, and the usual suggestion is that their territory stretched from the Dee to the Conwy. Tacitus makes no further mention of the Decangi, and the archaeological record shows few Roman military structures in the north-east of Wales, so it is generally assumed that the tribe soon capitulated and settled down to live under Roman rule.

To return to Tacitus' story, when the Brigantes had been sorted out - a simple operation, he says - the Romans returned to Wales. Their target this time was the **Silures [12]**:

"... but neither severity nor clemency converted the Silurian tribe, which continued the struggle and had to be repressed by the establishment of a legionary camp."

'Annals' Book XII Chapter 32

Tacitus talks of the Silures' "*natural ferocity*" ('Annals' Book XII Chapter 33), and in 'Agricola' Chapter 11, he expresses the view that:

"The dark complexion of the Silures, their usually curly hair, and the fact that Spain is the opposite shore to them, are an evidence that Iberians of a former date crossed over and occupied these parts."

At any rate, by this time (c.50), the forces of the Silures were under the direction of, the famous British resistance leader, Caratacus:

"... whose many successes, partial or complete, had raised him to a pinnacle above the other British leaders. But on this occasion, favoured by the treacherous character of the country, though inferior in military strength, he astutely shifted the seat of war to the territory of the Ordovices [10] where, after being joined by all who feared a Roman peace, he put the final chance to trial."

'Annals' Book XII Chapter 33

Though Caratacus was defeated and taken captive to Rome, in 51, the struggle continued:

"Particularly marked was the obstinacy of the Silures, who were infuriated by a widely repeated remark of the Roman commander [i.e. Ostorius Scapula], that, as once the Sugambri [a Germanic tribe] had been exterminated or transferred to the Gallic provinces, so the Silurian name ought, once for all, to be extinguished."

'Annals' Book XII Chapter 39

At this point (52), Ostorius Scapula died - "broken by the weary load of anxiety". Aulus Didius Gallus was appointed governor:

"In spite of a rapid crossing, he found matters deteriorated, as the legion under Manlius Valens had been defeated in the interval. Reports of the affair were exaggerated: among the enemy, with the hope of alarming the commander on his arrival; by the commander - who magnified the version he heard - with the hope of securing additional credit, if he settled the disturbances, and a more legitimate excuse, if the disturbances persisted. In this case, again, the loss had been inflicted by the Silurians, and they carried their forays far and wide, until repelled by the advent of Didius."

'Annals' Book XII Chapter 40

In 57, Didius Gallus was replaced by Quintus Veranius. He died within a year of his appointment, "after harrying the Silurians in a few raids of no great significance" ('Annals' Book XIV Chapter 29).

In 60, the next governor, Gaius Suetonius Paullinus (58-61), was forced to abandon his campaign in Mona (Anglesey), "which had a considerable population of its own, while serving as a haven for refugees" ('Annals' Book XIV Chapter 29), to deal with Boudica's Rebellion.

The "powerful and warlike tribe of the Silures" were finally subdued under the governorship of Sextus Julius Frontinus (73-77) - "surmounting the difficulties of the country as well as the valour of the enemy" ('Agricola' Chapter 17).



(above) The amphitheatre, built next to the fortress, at Isca.

The legionary fortress of Isca (Caerleon, near Newport) was founded at this time. Frontinus' successor, Gnaeus Julius Agricola (77-84), immediately turned his attention to the troublesome Ordovices, and, according to Tacitus:

"The tribe was all but exterminated."

'Agricola' Chapter 18

Agricola followed up this success by completing the conquest of Mona.

The **Deceangli [9]** and the **Ordovices [10]** probably remained under military rule. In the south, however, it is a different story. The **Silures [12]** certainly became a civitas - the village of Caerwent, about eight miles east of Caerleon, is the site of the civitas capital: Venta Silurum - and the **Demetae [11]** probably became a civitas. Tacitus makes no reference to the Demetae at all. This, and the relative shortage of archaeological evidence for Roman military activity, has led to the suggestion that they were not hostile to Rome. Although there is no written evidence - literary or epigraphic - excavations at Maridunum (Carmarthen) have strongly indicated that it was civitas capital of the Demetae. When these civitates were established is not certain, but during reorganisation following Hadrian's visit to Britain of 122 doesn't seem an unreasonable suggestion.

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13: Cornovii, 14: Corieltaui, 15: Dobunni

These tribes lived in the midlands of, what is today, England. In the north-west of the region were the **Cornovii [13]**. Ptolemy attributes two towns to them: Deva (modern Chester) and Viroconium. The site of Viroconium - more fully: Viroconium Cornoviorum, civitas capital of the Cornovii - is the village of Wroxeter, Shropshire. The civitas would have been established after Viroconium was abandoned as a legionary base, apparently in favour of Deva, c.AD90. It was certainly in full swing by 130, since an inscription records the completion of the forum, which is dedicated to Hadrian (117-138), in that year. Viroconium became the fourth largest town in Roman Britain.



The substantial chunk of standing masonry, at the rear of this photograph (above) of remains at Viroconium, is colloquially known as 'the Old Work'. It formed the dividing wall between the bath complex's exercise-hall and the baths proper, with a double-door entrance.

The Cornovii share their name with a Caledonian tribe, placed by Ptolemy in the far north-east of Scotland. As far removed from there as it is possible to get in Britain, in the south-west peninsula of England, the 'Ravenna Cosmography' locates a place called Purocornavis. The text of the 'Cosmography' is, however, notoriously corrupt. Accordingly, Purocornavis has been unscrambled to

produce Durocornovium i.e. 'fortress of the Cornovii'. Presumably, these Cornovii were a division of the **Dumnonii [17]** tribe. The 'Antonine Itinerary' also places (in 'Iter XIII') a Durocornovium between Glevum (Gloucester) and Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester). This Durocornovium is usually identified with the remains of a small Roman town adjacent to the village of Wanborough, Wiltshire. Cornovii, in all probability, means 'people of the horn'. In the case of the tribal groups at the extreme ends of Britain, 'horn' is likely to refer to the peninsulas (or the many promontories which characterize the areas) on which they lived. Indeed, the term survives in the county name Cornwall - the 'wall' element coming from 'Walas' or 'Wealas', the Anglo-Saxon name for native Britons. In the case of the inland groups, 'horn' may be literally that - perhaps in reference to a horned god. In short, there is no reason to suspect that the various groups who shared the name Cornovii were related.

The **Corieltavi [14]** occupied the eastern midlands of England. They issued coins before the arrival of the Roman invaders. From about a decade before the start of the 1st century AD their coins were inscribed with, presumably, the names of their leaders. Some of the inscriptions are abbreviated to such an extent that the actual names are obscure, but it seems that coins were commonly issued with two (e.g. AVN COST), or in one case three (DVMNOC TIGIR SENO), names on them - though some of these 'names' could possibly be mintmarks, epithets or titles. Coins inscribed VEP CORF could refer to two individuals, or just one: VEP, son of COR (F='Filius'). Inscriptions on the late coinage are less fiercely contracted, and VOLISIOS is, in different issues, associated with three other names: DVMNOCOVEROS, DVMNOVELLAV and CARTIVEL. Was VOLISIOS the supreme leader and the other three his subordinates? Maybe. At any rate, it is generally believed that the Corieltavi had some form of shared leadership.

In fact, Ptolemy called this tribe the Coritani or Coritavi (depending on the manuscript).

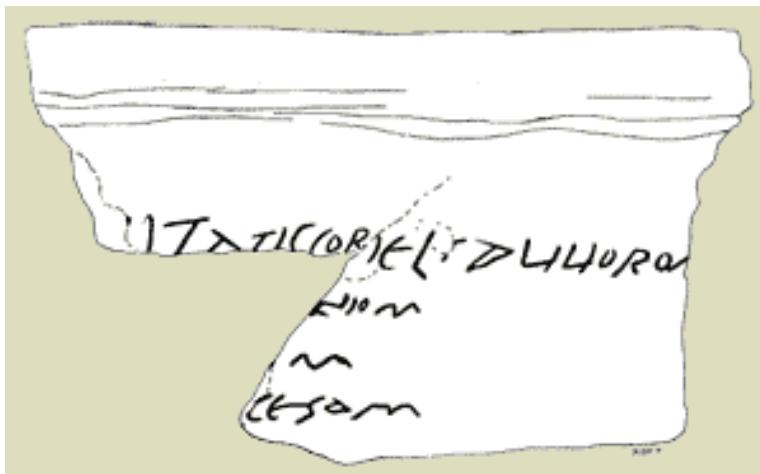
Recent detective work, however, has indicated that their name was really the Corieltavi:

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The Case of the Tripontium Tile

In 1965, during excavations at the Roman settlement of Tripontium, part of a 4th century roof-tile was found. (Tripontium is sited about fifteen miles to the south of Ratae, now Leicester, which is one of two towns attributed to the Coritani/Coritavi by Ptolemy.) At least four lines of text had been scratched into the clay whilst it was still soft. At the time of its discovery, a phrase on the tile was deciphered as "[CIV]ITATISCORIELSOLILIORM", which implied the existence of an otherwise unknown 'civitas Corielsoliliorum'.

In 1983, a re-examination of the script, by R.S.O. Tomlin, produced a revised reading: "[CI]VITATISCORIELTAVVOROM", i.e. "of the civitas of the Corieltavi". The Corieltavi, though, were still an unknown tribe.



[CI]VITATIS CORIEL AVVOROM[...]
 [...].NIOM
 [...].M
 [...]CESAM
 [...]

R.S.O. Tomlin: "The subscript dots mark letters whose reading is probable. The other letters seem certain, even though fragmentary 'cursive' inscriptions can be difficult since the Romans used a variety of letter-forms which changed in the course of time."

The author of the 'Ravenna Cosmography' was thought to have garbled the name of the civitas capital, of Ptolemy's Coritani/Coritavi, as "Ratecorion". The next place listed by the Cosmographer being, the unidentified, "Eltauori".

In view of the roof-tile inscription it seems reasonable to deduce that, rather than being two places, the Cosmographer's "Ratecorion" and "Eltauori" are parts of the same scrambled civitas capital name: Ratae Corieltavorum. It seems then that Ptolemy's Coritani/Coritavi should really be called the Corieltavi.

Ptolemy assigned them the towns of Lindum (Lincoln) and Ratae (Leicester). Lindum appears to have been abandoned as a legionary base in the late 70s - its legion (II Adiutrix) seemingly moved to Deva (Chester). During the reign of Domitian (81-96), probably c.90, a 'colonia' (a colony of legionary veterans) was founded at Lindum. The name Ratae is derived from a Celtic word that means 'ramparts', but, though there is evidence of a pre-Roman settlement, no evidence has been found of defensive earthworks. It is assumed that there was a Roman fort at Ratae, but its remains are elusive. It would have been vacated by c.80, and later, probably round about 100 (when a street-grid was laid out), Ratae became civitas capital of the Corieltavi.

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15: Dobunni

The **Dobunni** [15] lived in the south-west of the English midlands (centred on modern Gloucestershire, and extending further south than the word 'midlands' might imply: to about the river Brue, Somerset). They issued coins prior to the Roman Conquest. Beginning two or three decades before the end of the 1st century BC, their coins bear the abbreviated names of, what are assumed to be, their rulers. Though the chronological order in which the coins were issued (and hence the sequence of the named rulers) is a matter of opinion, it seems likely from their distribution that, at times anyway, the Dobunni were divided into a northern and a southern faction - the line of the Bristol Avon approximately making the boundary between the two factions. This would fit neatly with the comment by Dio Cassius ('Romaika' Book LX Chapter 20) that Aulus Plautius, commander of the

Roman forces in AD43, "gained by capitulation a part of the Bodunni". (There is general agreement that the Bodunni are actually the Dobunni.) Further, Dio says that this "part" of the Dobunni were, at the time, subject to the **Catuvellauni [19]** - eastern neighbours of the, presumed, northern faction of the Dobunni. Soon after the invasion, the Romans built a fort at a place they called Corinium, about 3 miles to the south of a native 'territorial oppidum' at Bagendon, Gloucestershire. It appears that the attraction of the 'bright lights' of the expanding settlement ('vicus') at Corinium persuaded the locals to abandon their oppidum. After the army moved on, probably in the mid-70s, Corinium became the civitas capital of the Dobunni, i.e. Corinium Dobunnorum. The town, today Cirencester, became the second largest in Roman Britain (Londinium being the largest). It is possible, however, that the southern faction of the Dobunni were incorporated into another civitas: the **Belgae [23]**. This civitas - capital: Venta Belgarum (Winchester, Hampshire) - appears to have been an artificial territorial division contrived by the Romans, and Ptolemy seems to assign Bath, which would be expected to have belonged to the Dobunni, to them. Ptolemy attributes one town to the Dobunni, and that is Corinium. Some 16 miles north-west of Corinium, though, was Glevum (modern Gloucester), where, on the site of a vacated legionary fortress, a colonia was established during the reign of Nerva (96-98).

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16: Durotriges, 17: Dumnonii

The Durotriges and the Dumnonii occupied the south-west of, what is now, England. The Durotriges were centred on Dorset. Although they minted coins before the Roman conquest, they were never inscribed with the name of a ruler. When the Romans invaded, in AD43, Vespasian (the future emperor) was in command of Legio II Augusta as it marched into the south-west (see: Invasion). In his biography of Vespasian (Chapter 4), Suetonius reports that:

"... he fought thirty battles with the enemy. He reduced to subjection two powerful nations, more than twenty towns [actual word: 'oppida'], and the island of Vectis [Isle of Wight], near Britannia ..."

That one of the "two powerful nations" was the Durotriges seems certain; the identity of the other is less so (though a southern faction of the **Dobunni [15]** would fit the bill nicely). The "twenty oppida" taken by Vespasian would have to be hillforts, of which there are many in the Durotriges' territory, and which, although their heyday had past, the Durotriges continued to use. Indeed, the Durotriges may have been a confederation of chiefdoms, each centred on a hill fort. Evidence of combat has been unearthed at Dorset hill forts (see: The Fall of Maiden Castle). The one town assigned to the Durotriges by Ptolemy is, the otherwise unknown, Dunium. Though by no means certain, Maiden Castle - largest 'developed hill fort' in Britain - is probably the favourite candidate for Dunium.

Maiden Castle may have been the preeminent hillfort of the Durotriges. Just a couple of miles to its north-east sprang up the Roman town of Durnovaria (modern Dorchester), which, it is generally accepted, became civitas capital of the Durotriges. It is presumed that, in typical fashion, Durnovaria started as a vicus, though its fort has proved elusive. There is no written evidence - literary or epigraphic - that Durnovaria was the civitas capital, but the town's development makes it pretty certain that, after the army moved on (probably mid-AD70s), it acquired that status. However, two inscriptions, from Hadrian's Wall, record working-parties of a 'civitas Durotrigum Lendiniensis'. The name 'Lindinis' appears, sandwiched between two other uncertain (but apparently in the right vicinity) places in the 'Ravenna Cosmography', and its identification as Ilchester, Somerset, is now well established. Possibly then, at some stage (though it could be earlier, the 4th century appears to be the most popular guess), the civitas of the Duroriges was divided - the northerly part having its capital at, what is today, Ilchester.

Inhabiting the south-west peninsula of England were the **Dumnonii [17]** (any connection with the **Damnonii [2]**, who lived in southern Scotland, is very unlikely). Their border with the Durotriges was probably the Parrett-Axe line. The Dumnonii did not mint coins or have any large settlements - they were probably a grouping of small tribes. Their culture had more in common with their neighbours across the Channel, on the Armorican peninsula (now Brittany) in Gaul, than with their neighbours in Britain. It would seem reasonable to suppose that one of the "two powerful nations", that Suetonius reports were subdued by Vespasian, was the Dumnonii. It could be so, but Vespasian probably left Britain in 47, and the archaeological evidence tends to suggest that, for some reason, the Romans paused before pressing on to conquer the Dumnonii - the legionary fortress of Isca (now Exeter), for instance, seems to have been founded about the mid-50s. After its legion (II Augusta) moved on - in the mid-70s seems likely - Isca became civitas capital: Isca Dumnoniorum. The Dumnonii, however, appear to have been little influenced by 'Romanization'.

Unique to the Land's End peninsula and Isles of Scilly are a class of compartmented dwellings called 'courtyard houses'. These stone built houses, roughly circular in plan, consist of a number of rooms arranged around a courtyard. It is likely that the rooms had thatched or turf roofs, whilst the courtyard was open. The houses are found singly or in village groups. The best known villages being at Chysauster (about 4 miles north of Penzance) and Carn Euny (about 5 miles east of Penzance). It is thought that they were constructed, flourished, and abandoned within the period of Roman occupation.



(above) The entrances to two rooms ('Round Room' on the left, 'Long Room' on the right), looking from the courtyard, of House 6 at Chysauster.

The archaeological evidence at Carn Euny shows that the village of courtyard houses was the final phase of development on the site. A component of previous - i.e. Later Iron Age (from c.400BC-AD43) - construction is a subterranean passage, known generically as a 'souterrain', but in Cornwall by the local term 'fogou'. The purpose of fogous is the subject of debate - places for storage or for religious activities are favourite contenders. There is also a fogou at Chysauster (but now in a poor state and blocked off), however, unlike Carn Euny, no traces of earlier dwellings have been found. Indeed, the orderly arrangement of buildings (there are nine main houses) at Chysauster suggests a degree of 'town planning'.

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18: Iceni, 19: Catuvellauni, 20: Trinovantes, 21: Cantiaci

The **Trinovantes [20]** lived in the south-east of England, north of the Thames - roughly, modern Essex. In 'The Gallic War', Julius Caesar wrote that, during his campaign of 54BC (see: Caesar's Expeditions), the British opposition was commanded by one Cassivellaunus. Cassivellaunus was expanding his, unnamed, tribe's territory, and the Trinovantes had found it necessary to appeal to Caesar for protection. After he had got Cassivellaunus on the run, Caesar says that he accepted the surrender of the Cenimagni, the Segontiaci, the Ancalites, the Bibroci and the Cassi. These five tribes are otherwise unknown. There is speculation that the Cassi may have been the tribe of Cassivellaunus. It seems fairly certain that Cassivellaunus' tribe, whatever their name, were the precursors of the **Catuvellauni [19]**. The Catuvellauni were the Trinovantes' western neighbours - centred on Hertfordshire, with the Thames as their southern border.

There is a possibility that Caesar's Cenimagni were the **Iceni [18]**. The Iceni's territory was centred on Norfolk - they were the Trinovantes' northern neighbours. The richest Iron Age treasure discovered in Britain was unearthed at Snettisham in Norfolk. A burial date of c.70BC is suggested by imported Gallo-Belgic coins included in the hordes. Soon after this time, the Iceni were minting their own coins. In due course, inscribed coins were struck - probably the earliest (perhaps c. 25BC) are inscribed CAN DVRO, which may, or may not, be an abbreviated ruler's name and mintmark. Some later coins are inscribed ECEN, which has been taken to be a version of the tribe's name, but this is not at all usual (indeed, it would be unique in Britain), and it must be, at least, as likely that it represents a leader's name.

The first indigenous British coins (not struck, but cast, in a tin-rich bronze, and known as 'potins') were probably produced in Cantium (Kent), around the end of the second century BC. Caesar claimed that "the inhabitants of Cantium" were:

"By far the most civilized of all the natives [of Britain] ... whose culture does not differ much from that of the Gauls."

'The Gallic War' Book V Chapter 14

And he mentions:

"... Cingetorix, Carvilius, Taximagulus, and Segovax, the four kings who ruled over the country [i.e. Cantium] ..."

'The Gallic War' Book V Chapter 22

Presumably, each king ruled his own tribal sept, but Caesar doesn't elucidate. In fact, he doesn't give "the inhabitants of Cantium" a tribal name at all, but they would later become the civitas of the **Cantiaci [21]** (also known as the Cantii).

On his departure from Britain, Caesar had warned Cassivellaunus not to wage war on the Trinovantes, but, from the evidence of inscribed coins and a few scraps of classical text, a possible train of events can be constructed (see: Prelude to Invasion), in which the expansionist ambitions of the Catuvellauni (appropriately, the sense of the name is thought to be 'men good in battle') precipitated the Claudian invasion of AD43.

At the time of the invasion, the Catuvellauni's dominions apparently included the Trinovantes and the Cantiaci. Indeed, the Catuvellauni had shifted their 'capital' to the 'oppidum' of Camulodunum (now Colchester, Essex), in Trinovantian territory. British opposition to the invading Roman army was led by Catuvellaunian rulers: the brothers Caratacus and Togodumnus. They were defeated. Togodumnus was killed, but Caratacus escaped and continued to lead the British resistance. Camulodunum was captured and a legionary fortress was built there. (See: Invasion.)

Late in 47, Publius Ostorius Scapula arrived in Britain to begin his term as governor. He was, says Tacitus, "confronted by disturbance". Having dealt with the immediate problem, Scapula:

"... prepared to disarm the suspect and to overawe the whole district on this side of the Trent and Severn."

'Annals' Book XII Chapter 31

Until this time, the Iceni had not opposed the Romans. They were a client kingdom. Presumably, insulted at being "suspected" by the new governor, and having no intention of being disarmed, they instigated a rebellion. They were, however, easily defeated. It may have been as a result of these events that Prasutagus was placed on the Icenian throne. Scapula then undertook a campaign to subdue the tribes of, what is now, Wales. The **Silures [12]** proved to be particularly troublesome. Probably in 49, to release troops for service against the Silures but still keep his back protected, he replaced the legionary fortress at Camulodunum - erstwhile capital of the 'Catuvellaunian empire' - with a 'colonia' (a colony of legionary veterans). Leading the Silures' forces was, erstwhile Catuvellaunian ruler, Caratacus. Eventually, in 51, he was captured and taken to Rome. (See: Resistance.)

Meanwhile, in the Catuvellaunian homeland, the natives had quickly settled down to life under Roman rule. The town of Verulamium (at modern St.Albans, Hertfordshire) was being developed on the site of the old tribal capital. In 1992, the rich burial, dated to c.55, of a high-status native was discovered at Folly Lane in St.Albans. The archaeological evidence does not indicate a lengthy Roman military presence at Verulamium, and it has been conjectured that the wealthy individual from Folly Lane was an unrecorded 'client king'. Further, it has been suggested that this man might be Adminius (equated with Amminus, who issued coins in Kent), a brother of Caratacus and Togodumnus, who, says Suetonius in his biography of Caligula (Chapter 44), was banished by their father, in about 40, and surrendered himself to the emperor. The surmise being that Adminius/Amminus was expelled from Britain for his pro-Roman opinions, but returned in the wake of the Roman invasion and was installed as client king of the Catuvellauni. The Catuvellauni, therefore, possibly had a period as a client kingdom prior to becoming a civitas. Verulamium was clearly the civitas capital, though it is nowhere clearly attested. Perhaps surprisingly, the Cantiaci, "by far the most civilized of all the natives", seem to have been slower to adapt to the new order. Unlike Verulamium, Durovernum (now Canterbury) - sited, like Verulamium, within an existing oppidum, and which became the civitas capital: Durovernum Cantiacorum - does not exhibit signs of early Romanization, and there appears to have been military occupation until at least 60.

Prasutagus, client king of the Iceni, was, says Tacitus, "celebrated for his long prosperity". It was probably in the year 60 that Prasutagus died. He had taken the expedient measure of making:

"... the emperor his heir, together with his two daughters; an act of deference which he thought would place his kingdom and household beyond the risk of injury."

'Annals' Book XIV Chapter 31

He was sorely mistaken. His kingdom was pillaged. His wife, Boudica:

"... was subjected to the lash and his daughters violated: all the chief men of the Iceni were stripped of their family estates, and the relatives of the king were treated as slaves."

'Annals' Book XIV Chapter 31

The result was Boudica's Rebellion. Allies of the Iceni were:

"... the Trinovantes and others, who, not yet broken by servitude, had entered into a secret and treasonable compact to resume their independence."

'Annals' Book XIV Chapter 31

The hated veterans at Camulodunum were the first target of the rebels. They then destroyed the towns of Londinium (London) and Verulamium:

"... as the natives, with their delight in plunder and their distaste for exertion, left the forts and garrison-posts on one side, and made for the point which offered the richest material for the pillager and was unsafe for a defending force."

'Annals' Book XIV Chapter 33

In the decisive battle, at an unknown site, the Romans, although vastly outnumbered, were victorious over the undisciplined rebels. There would have followed a period of direct military rule for the Iceni, but then they became a civitas, with its capital at Venta Icenorum (Caister St.Edmund, near Norwich).

Camulodunum, Verulamium and Londinium recovered from the devastation wreaked by Boudica. Camulodunum is the only town assigned to the Trinovantes by Ptolemy, so the tribe would appear to have been administered from the colonia. It is possible that a site, on the route between Londinium and Camulodunum, was given the rather grand name: Caesaromagus (now Chelmsford), in anticipation of it becoming civitas capital of the Trinovantes. There is, though, neither written nor archaeological evidence to indicate that this ever occurred. Perhaps the plan was overtaken by the events just described, and never came to fruition.



(Above) The theatre at Verulamium.

In his description of the Boudican revolt, Tacitus describes Verulamium as a 'municipium'. Like a colonia, a municipium was self-governing and had its own surrounding territory. However, whereas a colonia was a town created for retired legionaries (by definition, Roman citizens), the rank of municipium conferred some privileges of citizenship to an existing town (hence, a municipium was of lower status than a colonia). Verulamium is the only reported municipium in Britain, but if it really was a municipium - maybe Tacitus used the term as a literary device, to underline the magnitude of Boudica's transgressions - it seems reasonable to suppose there were others. Then again, assuming Verulamium was a municipium, it may not have been such in 60 - Tacitus may have been applying

the term retrospectively. Whatever its status, Verulamium became the third largest - after Londinium and Corinium Dobunnorum (Cirencester), civitas capital of the **Dobunni** [15] - town in Roman Britain.

Londinium developed, on a greenfield site, at the northern end of a Thames crossing place. (The town developed on the northern bank of the river, but Ptolemy, presumably in error, assigns it to the Cantiaci.) It sprang up soon after the invasion - a timber drain has been dated AD47 - and grew quickly:

"We now think that it [the population] may have been as great as 10,000 by AD60 ..."
Peter Rowsome, in 'British Archaeology' (Issue 54, August 2000)

Tacitus says that, at the time of the Boudican revolt, Londinium:

"... though not distinguished by the title of colonia, was none the less a busy centre, chiefly through its crowd of merchants and stores."
'Annals' Book XIV Chapter 33

Excavated artefacts indicate the population of pre-Boudican Londinium was predominantly male. It probably had much the same sort of character as a town from the 'Wild West'; with a cosmopolitan population of officials, merchants, tradesmen, chancers and snakeoil salesmen. Londinium rose from the ashes of Boudica's destruction on a grander scale, and replaced Camulodunum as administrative centre for the whole province of Britannia.

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22: Atrebates, 23: Belgae, 24: Regni

Julius Caesar begins 'The Gallic War' with the comment:

"Gaul, taken as a whole, is divided into three parts, one of which is inhabited by the Belgae, another by the Aquitani, and a third by a people who call themselves Celts and whom we call Gauls. These peoples differ from one another in language, institutions, and laws."

Later, Caesar mentions that:

"The interior of Britain is inhabited by a people who, according to oral tradition - so the Britons themselves say - are aboriginal; the maritime districts by immigrants who crossed over from Belgium to plunder, and attack the aborigines, almost all of them being called after the tribes from whom the first comers were an offshoot."

'The Gallic War' Book V Chapter 12

One of the Belgic tribes of Gaul was the Atrebates. At the end of 51BC or early in 50BC, it seems that Commius, king of the Atrebates, sought refuge in Britain (see: Caesar's Expeditions). It is thought that Commius equates to COMMIOS, a name which features on the earliest inscribed British coins. Caesar makes no mention of a British Atrebates tribe in the mid-1st century BC, but they are recorded by Ptolemy in the mid-2nd century AD. It is possible then, that they began as a federation of various immigrant and indigenous groups, living between the middle Thames and the south coast (approximately: modern Berkshire, Surrey, Hampshire, East and West Sussex), founded by Commius himself. From the evidence provided by inscribed coins, and from some mentions in classical texts, a possible chain of events can be constructed (see: Prelude to Invasion), culminating in the appeal for Roman assistance by Verica, king of the British Atrebates (by then, reduced to just the southern part of their former territory), which led to the Claudian invasion of AD43.

Assuming Verica did seek Roman help, the Atrebates probably welcomed the invading army. Excavations at Fishbourne, near Chichester, West Sussex, in the 1960s, uncovered an invasion period military supply depot. This has led to speculation that a section of the invasion fleet (some have suggested the main part) landed here, rather than at Richborough in Kent. Probably the more popular explanation for the Fishbourne site, however, is that it was built a few weeks after the initial landings, to support the onslaught of Legio II Augusta (commanded by, future emperor, Vespasian) on the Isle of Wight and south-western England (see: Invasion). It would have been in use for only a handful years, and, following its abandonment, a timber-built civilian residence was erected on the site. In about 65, the timber buildings were superceded by a luxurious masonry villa. In about 75, work began on the construction of a large and imposing palace. The layout consisted of four large wings arranged around a rectangular formal garden. The vast entrance hall was in the centre of the east wing. The audience chamber was opposite, in the centre of the west wing, reached by a hedge lined avenue through the central garden. The big question is: who was this palace built for? Conjecture centres on one Togidubnus (or Cogidubnus).

Tacitus writes:

"Aulus Plautius was the first governor of consular rank [43-47], and Ostorius Scapula the next [47-52]. Both were famous soldiers, and by degrees the nearest portions of Britain were brought into the condition of a province, and a colony of veterans was also introduced. Some of the civitates were given to king Cogidumnus, who lived down to our day a most faithful ally. So was maintained the ancient and long-recognized practice of the Roman people, employing even kings to make others slaves."

'Agricola' Chapter 14

In the above brief passage, Tacitus sums up nine years of British history. The only certainty is that "king Cogidumnus" was granted "some of the *civitates*" between 43 and 52. Tacitus' phraseology, however, seems to imply that "Cogidumnus" had been ruling a kingdom, and was then granted extra territory at a later date. Moreover, the reference to the granting of that extra territory comes after the establishment of the colony at Camulodunum (Colchester), which was probably in 49. It may be, therefore, that "Cogidumnus" was installed as a 'client king', by the Romans, soon after the invasion of 43, and then, having proved he was a "faithful ally", his kingdom was augmented, by the addition of "some of the *civitates*", in, or soon after, 49. What Tacitus makes no mention of at all is where that kingdom was.

In 1723, a slab of Purbeck marble with a Latin inscription was found in Chichester (Noviomagus in Roman times). The left hand side of the slab was missing, and the rest broke into four pieces during its retrieval. The reconstructed inscription refers to: "Tiberius Claudius Togidubnus, great king in Britain". In fact, the first two letters of the name Togidubnus, are missing from the inscription, but it is now thought that, on linguistic grounds, TO, rather than CO, is likely to be correct. Either way, there is no doubt that this man is Tacitus' "king Cogidumnus". Because of the inscription's imperfect condition, the reading "great king" is not 100% guaranteed. It is, however, both possible and plausible - it certainly fits neatly with Tacitus' remark. Togidubnus, then, was a favoured client king. He was probably an Atrebatian aristocrat, in all likelihood a relative of Verica (whose fate is unknown). If Noviomagus was Togidubnus' capital, which seems a reasonable supposition, then it also seems reasonable that he had an estate just a couple of miles to the west, at Fishbourne. The sequence of buildings there reflecting his increasing wealth. It could be more than coincidence that the palace was built during the reign of Vespasian (69-79). Togidubnus may have had dealings with Vespasian in the days when the latter was commanding the II Augusta. Possibly an exiled Togidubnus returned to Britain in Vespasian's company. In short, the two men might have been friends. In which case, Togidubnus would have supported Vespasian during, and in the aftermath of, the tumultuous year of 69, the Year of the Four Emperors, from which Vespasian emerged triumphant. Maybe Vespasian was so grateful, for his old friend's backing, that he funded the building of a palace at Fishbourne. On

the other hand, it remains possible (perhaps even probable) that Togidubnus was already dead, and his kingdom split up, by the time the palace was built.

The palace remained in use for some two centuries. It underwent considerable alteration until the 280s, when, with building work still underway, it was devastated by fire. It was abandoned and used as a source of building materials.

Fishbourne Palace originally had about one hundred rooms, most of which would have had mosaic floors.

In the top picture (right), it can be seen that an original mosaic has been overlaid with a new one during later alterations.

The bottom picture (right) shows the central, 'cupid on a dolphin', design, from the finest extant mosaic at Fishbourne. It dates from the mid-2nd century.

Togidubnus does not appear to have issued any coins. If he had, their distribution would have given an indication of his kingdom's extent. However, it seems reasonable to suppose that it comprised the cluster of three civitates based between the middle Thames and the south coast (the territory associated with Commius), which, following Togidubnus' death, functioned independently of each other:

- 1) To the north, were the **Atrebates** [22]. Their capital, Calleva Atrebatum, is now Silchester, Hampshire.
- 2) In the west, were the **Belgae** [23]. Their capital, Venta Belgarum, is now Winchester, Hampshire. The Belgae were one of the three peoples of Gaul named by Julius Caesar - it is not the name of an individual tribe - so the civitas seems to be an artificial division imposed by the Romans. Ptolemy assigns the town of Aquae Calidae ('hot springs') to the Belgae. This can only be modern Bath, and, presumably, is how it was known before it acquired the more familiar name of Aquae Sulis. If Ptolemy is correct (and not everyone believes it is likely), then it would seem that the southern **Dobunni** [15] had been split away from their northern compatriots, and incorporated into the Belgae.
- 3) In the east, based on Togidubnus' capital, Noviomagus (Chichester, West Sussex), were the **Regni** [24]. The name Regni comes from Ptolemy. In the 'Ravenna Cosmography', though, their civitas capital is rendered "*Navimago Regentium*". There is a long standing theory that *Regentium* should be emended to *Regnensium* - hence the people should be called the *Regnenses*, which conveniently allows a link to be made with Togidubnus, since the name can be translated as 'the people of the kingdom' (Latin: *regnum* = kingdom). This wordplay, however, may be nothing more than wishful thinking - "more than rash", says Celtic language specialist Kenneth Jackson (in 'Britannia', Vol.1, 1970).



Professor Jackson's proposal, that they should actually be the Regini, a Brythonic name translating along the lines of 'the proud ones' (indicating that they were a pre-existing tribal grouping, not a Roman creation), has gained widespread acceptance. Their civitas capital should, then, be Noviomagus Reginorum. In the British section of the 'Antonine Itinerary', 'Iter VII' is a route from Noviomagus (travelling via Venta Belgarum and Calleva Atrebatum) to Londinium. Noviomagus is called Regno - in all probability, a contraction of the tribal epithet (In 'Iter V', Venta Icenorum appears as Icinos), and not an indication that the civitas was known to the Romans as 'the kingdom'. Nevertheless, uncertainty persists.

The 'Ravenna Cosmography' is a list, compiled, in Latin by an anonymous cleric, around the year 700, of places in the known world. In the British section, the Cosmographer lists three hundred odd towns, rivers and islands, for which his source material was Roman, and so his record represents Britain as it had been some three centuries before he was working. Unfortunately, he doesn't appear to have fully understood the maps and itineraries he was working from. His approach is illogical and the text is notoriously corrupt.

The 'Antonine Itinerary' is a collection of routes (i.e. lists of waypoints and distances) for various journeys in the Roman world. It probably originated during the reign of Caracalla (211-217), but then received modifications until Diocletian's time (284-305). There are fifteen itineraries in the British section.

Site of the Roman fort and settlement associated with Dolaucothi Gold Mines, in Carmarthenshire.

When some tribal names are rendered into Latin, there seems to be flexibility in the choice of word-ending. For instance, '...es' and '...ii', in:

Atrebates, also found as Atrebatiⁱⁱ

Brigantes, also found as Brigantii

Caledones, also found as Caledonii.

Actually: Cantiaci.

Paulus Orosius wrote his 'Historiarum Adversus Paganos Libri Septem' (Seven Books of History Against the Pagans), at the request of St Augustine of Hippo, in about 417.

The Votadini may be found (particularly in older publications) called the Otalini or Otadini, after forms found in Ptolemy. However, in the wake of Britain's abandonment by Rome, the territory emerged as the kingdom of Gododdin (a Welsh language word), and this word-development, apparently, makes it certain that Votadini was the original form.

Ptolemy assigns six poleis to the Damnonii, and the coordinates he attaches to these places indicate that the tribal lands stretched well beyond the Forth-Clyde line, into southern Perthshire. This, however, is viewed with scepticism. In a paper entitled 'Ptolemy, Tacitus and the tribes of north Britain' (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 1987), John C Mann and David J Breeze note:

"It seems unlikely that one tribe occupied this large area, since in the middle lie not only the Campsie Fells and Kirkpatrick Hills, but also the boggy valley of the river Kelvin and the mosses of Stirlingshire, all areas largely devoid of population in the Iron Age."

Possibly, Ptolemy, or a later copyist, mistakenly allocated the three poleis that lie beyond the Forth-Clyde isthmus to the Damnonii, instead of to a more northerly tribe whose name was overlooked.

The work is traditionally attributed to, philosopher, statesman and dramatist, Seneca (Lucius Annaeus Seneca, c.4BC-AD65).

Unfortunately, in a now-lost section of the 'Annals'.

Ptolemy also places a tribe of the same name in the west of Ireland.

For example, a lead ingot (or 'pig'), of some 24x6x4 inches, found at Chester in 1838, is date stamped: IMP. VESP. V. T. IMP. III. COS (Vespasian consul for the fifth time and Titus for the third time), i.e. AD74, on the top, and has DECEANGL on one side. The lead is assumed to have been sourced from Halkyn Mountain, Flintshire. Opinion is virtually unanimous that Tacitus' Decangi and the lead producing tribe represented by the inscription DECEANGL are one and the same. This is, of course, incorrect.

After Londinium (London), Corinium Dobunnorum (Cirencester) and Verulamium (St.Albans).

The original reading was by R.P. Wright. In 'Transactions', Volume 58, of The Leicestershire Archaeological and Historical Society, R.S.O. Tomlin notes that: "*Mr Wright has kindly expressed his approval of the new reading.*"

The "VV" of the inscription is sometimes rendered as 'au' (to give Corieltauvi), but, the simpler single 'v' is now generally preferred (hence Corieltavi).

The local population, keen to make a profit by selling goods and services to the Roman military, would form a settlement, called a 'vicus', outside forts. Most civitas capitals began in this way.

Ptolemy places Legio II Augusta at Isca (Exeter), but, at the time he was writing, the II Augusta were actually based at another place called Isca (now Caerleon), in the tribal area of the **Silures [12]**. It used to be thought that Ptolemy had confused the two Iscas - wrongly locating the II Augusta amongst the Dumnonii, rather than the Silures. It now seems more likely, however, that he was simply using outdated source material. In fact, it is virtually certain - no inscription has been found to put the matter completely beyond doubt - that the II Augusta had been stationed at Exeter. What is uncertain is when they left. The fortress at Caerleon was built in the mid-70s, and although the II Augusta are not definitely placed there until 100 (by an inscription), it is generally supposed that they were at Caerleon from its beginning. There is, though, a widespread notion that they spent the period from the mid-60s to the mid-70s based at Glevum (Gloucester). Perhaps the most compelling piece of evidence that the II Augusta were, indeed, at Exeter, and did move directly from there to Caerleon, is the discovery of terracotta antefixes from the same mold at both sites.

It is often suggested that Cenimagni should be 'Iceni magni' i.e. 'the great Iceni'.

'Cantii' - a form found in Ptolemy - is, in all likelihood, erroneous. A text, found in 1986, on a writing tablet preserved in the bed of the River Walbrook (in the City of London), would seem to put beyond doubt that 'Cantiaci' is the correct form. The text, which is dated 14th March AD118, is part of a document pertaining to the ownership of a piece of woodland in the "civitate Cantiacorum".

Probably the most widely held view is that Cantium means something along the lines of 'corner land', and that the Cantiaci are named (perhaps a designation imposed by the Romans) from the land they occupy.

The correct form of the tribal name is provided by an inscription recording a working-party of the 'civitas Catuvellaunorum' on Hadrian's Wall.

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The territory occupied by the Belgae was rather larger than the modern country of Belgium. Towards the west it was bounded by the Channel/North Sea; to the north and east, the Rhine; towards the south by the Seine and Marne.

The reading "great king in Britain" has now superceded the reading "king, imperial legate in Britain", which can be found in many older publications. The new reading is preferable:

- a) because it fits better with the indications of what letters missing from the inscription were, and
- b) because the inscription makes better sense.

In the biography of, his father-in-law, Agricola, Tacitus commented that Togidubnus "lived down to our day a most faithful ally". This was written c.98, so all that can be said for certain is that Togidubnus was dead by then. No mention of Togidubnus is made in relation to Agricola's governorship of Britain (77-84), so it seems safe to assume he didn't die during that period. He could, of course have died after, but the phrase seems most comfortable if Togidubnus was dead before Agricola's term in office. In truth, the link between King Togidubnus and Fishbourne Palace is neat, but completely unsubstantiated.

Sulis was the native goddess of the springs at Bath. The Romans equated her with their own goddess Minerva, and her name appears in coupled form, 'Sulis Minerva', on inscriptions from Bath. The gilded bronze head of Sulis Minerva, discovered in 1727, would have been part of a, slightly bigger than life-size, statue.

The data from 'Iter VII' has been transferred to the sketch map below. Distances are in Roman miles. Clausentum has been identified with Bitterne (now a suburb of Southampton), but with no degree of certainty. Although it is the correct distance from Venta Belgarum (Winchester), it is about ten miles further from Regno (Chichester) than indicated by 'Iter VII'. If the identification of Clausentum is correct, the simplest explanation is that an x has been lost during the text's transmission (i.e. xx should read xxx). Pontibus ('at the bridges') is a Thames crossing in the vicinity of Staines. Two consecutive stages - Venta Belgarum to Galleva Atrebatum (Calleva Atrebatum, Silchester) and thence to Pontibus - seem to exhibit the same copyist's error: the substitution of xxii (22) for xxv (25).





David Braund ('Ruling Roman Britain: Kings, Queens, Governors and Emperors from Julius Caesar to Agricola', 1996):

"A large area of uncertainty surrounds the name of the people over whom Cogidubnus reigned: they seem to have been termed the Regni, or Regnenses. It is at least a remarkable coincidence that the subjects of this *rex magnus* should bear a name that so evokes the Latin for kingdom, *regnum*... it is surely likely enough that the realm of Cogidubnus, steadfast over time (as Tacitus explicitly shows), became known to the Romans simply as 'the kingdom', *regnum*."

John T. Koch ('Celtic Culture: A Historical Encyclopedia', 2006):

"The Rēgni were the one *civitas* in Roman Britain with a Latin name, which seems to signify 'people of the kingdom [of Cogidubnus]'. This tribe was created at the time of the Roman conquest from part of the traditional country of the Atrebates, who had lost ground during the period before the invasion under pressure from the anti-Roman Catuvellauni."

The surviving text of Tacitus' 'Agricola' is, it seems, derived from a single 9th century manuscript. In the 15th century copies were made from this 'original', which itself was lost. Its remains were discovered in 1902 - the beginning and end sections being 15th century replacements. At any rate, there are a number of places where the meaning of the text as it now exists is not clear. The translation used in this webpage was made in the 1860s, by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb, but it has been modified, sometimes considerably, in the light of more recent scholarship.

Stan Wolfson, 'Tacitus, Thule and Caledonia', 2002.

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(below) A silver unit (1.12 g) of the Dobunni, inscribed with the name BODVOC (probably for Boduoc).



The distribution of this individual's coins suggest that he ruled a northern faction of the tribe. According to one theory (among several): the coins of BODVOC and CORIO (BODVOC's co-ruler) are the earliest inscribed issues of the Dobunni, and by the time of the Roman invasion, in 43, the Dobunni were united under a single leader. At the other extreme is the notion that BODVOC and CORIO were the last rulers named on coins; that BODVOC soon surrendered to the Romans, and continued to rule his northern faction as a 'client king'.

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Sources:

- Tacitus 'Annals' by John Jackson
- Pausanias 'Description of Greece' by Peter Levi
- Julius Caesar 'The Gallic War' by T. Rice Holmes
- Ptolemy 'Geography' by Edward Luther Stevenson
- Suetonius 'Lives of the Twelve Caesars' by J.C. Rolfe
- Orosius 'Historiarum Adversus Paganos Libri Septem' by Roy Deferrari
- Tacitus 'Agricola' by Alfred John Church and William Jackson Brodribb (Revised)

End

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