**THE ROMANS IN BRITAIN**

The English people are made of different races that came from different areas of Europe at different periods of time.

**The Iberians**

The first people to come to England were probably prehistoric people who came from Iberia or from North Africa. They were black haired people. At first these people reached England because they were hunters then they kept animals and grew corn crops, and knew how to make pottery. These were the first of several waves of invaders before the first arrival of the Celts.

**The Celts**

Around 700 BC, another group of people began to arrive. Many of them were tall, and had fair or red hair and blue eyes. These were the Celts, who probably came from central Europe. The Celts are important in British history because they are the ancestors of many of the people in Highland Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Cornwall today. Celtic languages, which have been continuously used in some areas since that time, are still spoken.

**The Romans**

Julius Caesar made the first official contacts between Rome and Britain in 55- 54 BC, but the full Roman Conquest 10 came nearly a century later. The Emperor Claudius decided to invade in AD 43 because he was the new Emperor of Rome and needed to prove he was a strong ruler. In order to be sure of defeating the Celts, Claudius landed with 50,000 men at the site of modern-day Richborough in Kent. The Roman occupation of Britannia (most of modern-day England and Wales) was to last from AD 43--410.

Although the occupation of Britain lasted nearly 400 years, it remained incomplete. The more developed south­ east was conquered quickly, though there were later rebellions. This success was due to diplomacy as well as arms. The Romans benefited from alliances with sympathetic native rulers, who then enjoyed favoured status. The advancing Roman army-built fortresses, camps and roads and helped with construction in towns such as Camulodunum (Colchester), Britannia’s first capital. The earliest towns, dating from the mid-1st century, reveal wooden houses and shops as well as stone public buildings such as temples and administrative headquarters. The Romans also brought their particular style of architecture to the countryside in the form of villas, the most impressive of which contained garden-courtyards, mosaics, wall paintings and Mediterranean statues.

Many of the native tribes in Britannia - including the Iceni, the Brigantes and the Atrebates - were initially given semi-independence by the Romans. In AD 60, the king of the Iceni died, and the Romans decided to remove this independence. They seized property and raped his daughters. The girls’ mother, the tall, flame- haired Queen Boudicca, rose up in fury against the Romans. The Iceni army destroyed the towns of Camulodunum, Verulanium (St Albans) and the flourishing port of Londinium (London). The Romans eventually defeated the rebels in a battle during which, according to one Roman report, 80,000 Britons and just 400 Romans were killed, though it is difficult to judge the accuracy of this report. After the battle, Boudicca was determined not to be captured. She gave her daughters deadly poison before taking her own life. To this day, Boudicca remains so a symbol of revolt against occupation.

After the Boudiccan revolt, the Romans began to expand their area of control. The Roman province now included Wales, northern England and, briefly, southern Scotland. In AD 122, the Emperor Hadrian visited Britain. He ordered the construction of a 117 km-long stone wall from the River Tyne to the Solway Firth. Hadrians’ Wall separated the Roman province from the barbarian north, and was a visual demonstration of the power of Rome. However, its true historical significance is that it Symbolizes the failure of the Romans to conquer the whole of Britain.

The Romans brought many architectural splendors to Britain and also a money economy. The Roman troops had cash wages and were able to purchase items with them. The Romans started charging taxes and creating markets for their goods. Consequently, by the late 1st/early 2nd centuries AD people commonly used coins, even on the humble farms where most of the native population lived.

Cultural life in Roman Britain was complex yet harmonious. Romans and incomers from other provinces introduced their own religious customs, such as the worship of the fertility goddess Isis and the god of wine Bacchus, without destroying indigenous Celtic beliefs. Britons adopted Romanized names, e.g., Tiberius Claudius Cogidubnus, and the elite spoke and wrote the Roman language, Latin. People also continued to speak the native language of Britannia. It survives today in Wales and Cornwall as Brythonic.

The end of Roman Britain followed a series of Empire­ wide crises. Barbarians began to attack Roman provinces so with greater frequency, and in AD 401---02 Rome began to withdraw troops from Britain to defend ltaly. In AD 408-09, Britain was attacked by Saxons (the ancestors of the modern-day English), and in AD 410 the Emperor Honorious told the cities of Britain to look to your own defences. Consequently, Roman Britain came to an end because the Romans lacked the resources, rather than the will. A British comedian once famously asked,What have the Romans ever done for us. The truth is that they brought many benefits to Britain; whether the native go inhabitants of Britain wanted them is another question.