CAESAR'S INVASION OF BRITAIN

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Abstract

This paper examines the Roman invasions of and interactions with Britain in the mid first century BCE and early first century CE and evaluates the results. Specifically, this paper analyzes motives and the actual military events of the invasions of Julius Caesar in 55 and 54 BCE and evaluates their aftermath, leading up to the invasion of Claudius in 43 CE. Caesar's stated motive for launching the invasion was to prevent the islanders from interfering in the new Roman order being constructed in Gaul. However, as will be shown, Caesar's more personal motives, in the form of a desire for wealth and glory, played as much if not more of a role in the launching of these expeditions. In light of these motives, the invasions can be defined, at best, as partial successes. The Romans militarily defeated the enemy but failed to materially benefit from that victory. Caesar's account also leaves numerous points of scholarly debate unresolved on the surface, but a careful examination of the evidence allows us to answer them in part. This paper provides a thorough discussion of this interesting period as well as a look at the motives, actions, and fortunes of the participants.

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Table of Contents

Maps and Figures

Introduction

Julius Caesar was well known for his readiness to take risks in both his political and military careers. One such gamble was the two amphibious campaigns which Caesar launched against Britain in 55 and 54 BCE. Ostensibly launched due to British interference in Gaul, his actual motives are more questionable and open to interpretation. As military operations, the landings certainly held a great many risks: braving an unknown island over unfamiliar ocean conditions; separating his army from any practical support and leaving the still unsettled province of Gaul.

This thesis is an examination of Caesar's invasion of Britain using primary sources, and secondary studies. It will show that Caesar's motives for his expeditions were more complex than he stated in his commentaries, and that the results were variable. The previous major study along these lines is over 100 years old, and more recent scholarship either simply states alleged facts without examining them or focuses on specific topics. Caesar claimed that he invaded Britain in order to prevent the inhabitants from interfering with Gaul. Evidence shows, however, that the motives of wealth and glory played as much, if not more, of a role in motivating Caesar. The second purpose of the study is to evaluate the success of these invasions in the light of Caesar's motives and show the wider effects on the island, which ultimately led to the domination of the south-eastern portions by the Catuvellauni tribe. Overall, the results of the invasions could be described as a tactical success, a strategic success or failure (depending on Caesar's exact motives, with the latter more likely), a material failure, and a partial success in terms of propaganda. In addition, this paper will also examine points of academic debate arising out of Caesar's account and the evidence and arguments put forward by historians and

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researchers to answer these points, in order to provide as thorough an overview as possible for the campaigns.

The primary account of this operation is found in Caesar's own writings. His commentaries provide a relatively detailed account of the course of events during the campaign, along with a brief cultural and geographic overview of the island. There are no other detailed contemporary accounts, and later writers not only lack details, but quite likely used the commentaries as a source. However, Caesar's account leaves historians with many unanswered questions. Some of these questions include: What port did he sail from, and did he sail from the same port both years? Where and when did he land and where did the various battles and incidents take place? In addition, Caesar's account fails to describe the motivations of the Britons and the effect the Roman invasions had on those tribes of southeast England. Finally, Caesar's own motives for launching the invasions are open to debate. The commentaries were political documents written for a specific purpose, and his stated purposes within them might not be the same as his real motivations.

Any discussion of the topic at hand must of necessity involve a consideration of the relevant evidence. In the first chapter, the primary sources used for this paper and their strengths and weaknesses will be briefly examined. Next, the terrain and the island population of the period under discussion will be described, along with the Celtic military establishment. The next chapter will discuss Caesar's Gallic campaign up to 55 BCE and take a brief look at the nature of the Roman military in order to provide background and context for subsequent discussions. The next two chapters will cover the actual invasions and will attempt to examine the motivations of the Romans, evaluate the outcome in

relation to stated and unstated goals and address the points of debate, some of which have been described above. Finally, the outcome of the invasions in light of Caesar's possible motives will be examined, along with their impact on the British tribes. This final chapter will also address the period from 54 BCE to 43 CE and examine both political developments on the island and the British tribes' relationship with the wider Roman world.

As mentioned, the main source of ancient evidence is Caesar's own writings, and these will figure heavily as a source. Other sources, such as the letters of Cicero and the writings of Polybius, Cassius Dio and Pytheas, will be used where useful and appropriate. Numismatic evidence will be also be used in tracking cultural and political developments on the island in the period between Caesar's and Claudius' invasions. The mobile nature of the campaigns, however, has left little archeologically that could be conclusively tied to Caesar. Modern historical and scientific studies will also be used in this discussion. It is my hope that the reader of this thesis will gain a greater understanding of the motives, outcome and impact of Caesar's campaigns in Britain, and the points of scholarly debate raised by Caesar's account.

Chapter 1: Sources

Prior to beginning our discussion on the invasions, it is necessary to briefly examine and explain the uses and limitations of the available sources. The primary sources regarding Britain during the period of Caesar's campaigns are unfortunately fairly limited and almost wholly consist of the writings of Greek and Roman authors. The main sources for the landings in Britain are Caesar's own writings which will inevitably feature prominently in any discussion on the subject. Therefore the nature and limitations of the commentaries will be examined in some detail. Other sources which require some explanation, such as Cicero's letters, will also be addressed. Finally, the conclusions of some modern secondary scholars will be described in order to provide a link between this thesis and wider scholarship.

The primary source for Caesars' British expeditions and all his campaigns is his own writings. Specifically, the *Commentarii de Bello Gallico* serves as the only detailed contemporary source for the Gallic Wars, and therefore figures prominently in this thesis. Later authors provided either far less detail or likely used Caesar as a source. Therein lies the principal problem, for while the commentaries may be well-written and include cultural and geographical information, in addition to discussion of political and military events, they were not written as an unbiased historical document. Caesar had a specific political purpose in writing the commentaries, and this bias has to be kept in mind.

Exactly when the commentaries were published is unknown, only that they existed before 46 BCE.[1] They were either written during or after various yearly campaigns (possibly expanded from Caesar's dispatches to the senate), or all at once in

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[1] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Brutus*, Trans. G. L. Hendrickson (London: W. Heinemann, 1962), 76.262. Cicero praises the commentaries in a discourse on Roman rhetoric written that year.

the winter of 52-51 BCE.[2] Each book roughly covers the activities and events of a single

year, focusing heavily on the spring and summer campaigning season.[3] An eighth book

was written by Aulus Hirtius to link the Gallic War with Caesar's text describing the civil

wars.[4] On the surface, the writings appear to be a detached narrative of events in Gaul

during Caesar's tenure as proconsul, to the point that Caesar continually refers to himself

in the third person when describing his activities. They could be considered something of

a memoir recording his achievements for posterity.[5] However, Caesar had at least two

primary purposes in writing the commentaries beyond this. The first was to keep himself

and his activities fresh in the minds of the Roman populace, his primary supporters. The

second was to explain his actions to any potential critics, especially to his political

enemies in the Senate who would likely apply the most negative of motives to any action

of Caesar. There had been criticism in the Senate, for example, regarding Caesar's

actions against the Germans in 55 BCE, particularly from Cato, who accused Caesar of

breaking faith and advocated handing him over to the enemy.[6] In effect, the

commentaries are roughly comparable to a press-corps which would be attached to and

personally attended by particularly vainglorious generals like MacArthur or Montgomery

during World War II. The goal was to boast of achievements while downplaying defeats,

and to spread the preferred version of events to as wide an audience as possible. The

commentaries can easily be seen as serving the same purpose.

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[2] H.J. Edwards, *The Gallic War* (London: W. Heinemann, 1966), xv-xvi.
[3] Each book typically ends with the Roman army going into winter quarters and Caesar usually returning to Cisalpine Gaul to undertake administrative tasks.
[4] Caesar (Hirtius), *The Gallic War*, Trans. H.J. Edwards (London: W. Heinemann, 1966), 8.1.
[5] H.J. Edwards, *The Gallic War*, xvii.
[6] Plutarch, *Plutarch's Lives: Cato the Younger*, Trans. Bernadotte Perrin (London: W. Heinemann, 1914-26), 8:51.1-2.

The effects of these roles can be seen in various ways. The Gauls, Germans and Britons are all depicted as being as exotic and dangerous as possible, with common stereotypes. The German king Ariovistus, for example, is continually described as negotiating in bad faith, plotting treachery during negotiations, and generally as prideful, opportunistic and aggressive.[7] Germans as a whole are described as extremely militaristic and aggressive, necessitating Roman punitive campaigns to keep them in check. Another example of this barbarization lies in Caesar's emphasis on the importance of human sacrifice in the Druidic religion, a practice abhorred by the Romans.[8] He also repeatedly emphasized past defeats inflicted by the Gauls and Germans upon the Romans. When campaigning against Ariovistus, for example, Caesar compares the prospect of the Germans crossing the Rhine to the migration of the Cimbri and Teutones which had caused considerable damage to Roman territory.[9] This also served as the basis of the explanation for the expansion of his campaigns. The Belgae had to be attacked because they were threatening to preemptively attack the Romans, the Rhine had to be crossed to prevent the Germans from crossing into Gaul and threatening Roman interests, Britain had to be invaded because its tribes were attempting to disrupt the Belgae, and so on.[10] Any of these 'aggressors' could completely disrupt the situation in Gaul and threaten the Roman province. These were valid excuses for war and punitive campaigns in the Roman mind, and likely genuine to a point. On the other hand, Caesar did have personal motives for waging these campaigns, and depicting the 'barbarian' threat in this manner served to

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[7] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.36. Ariovistus states that it was the right of the conqueror to dictate what he pleased, and how invincible the Germans were compared to the Romans.
[8] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 6.16.
[9] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.33
[10] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 2.1, 4.16, 4.20.

answer critics who stated that his campaigns were for his own self-aggrandizement and not in the interests of the Republic.

A second feature of the commentaries is that Caesar is not personally responsible for setbacks or defeats. Instead, it is usually his subordinate officers who are depicted as being responsible, but almost never the men or the centurions.[11] This is in line with Caesar's position as a *popularis*, courting the favour of the lower and middle classes, as opposed to the upper classes.[12] Shortly before engaging Ariovistus, for example, it is his officers who are depicted as panicked and the entire army was infected by their fear.[13] Similarly, it is the differing opinions, cowardice and divided command structure of Sabinus and Cotta that leads to the slaughter of the fourteenth legion at the hands of Ambiorix. In other cases, he simply blames circumstance for setbacks. At Gergovia in 52 BCE, his attack is bloodily repulsed when the troops allegedly do not hear, or ignore, a pullback order.[14] Despite praising the zeal and eagerness of the troops, he is forced to abandon the siege. As commander of the army, Caesar was responsible for this defeat, but never acknowledges his responsibility in creating such a situation in the first place.

Despite this obvious bias, the commentaries are, in other respects, relatively fair and reliable. Caesar is perfectly willing to give his subordinates credit when it is due, instead of personally taking credit for any victory. For example, in 57 BCE, the twelfth legion was dispatched to open a route through the Alps but was besieged in its camp by the locals. Caesar praises its commander for skillfully extricating the legion from that situation, incidentally glossing over the fact that the operation had failed completely.[15]

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[11] [11]Adrian Goldsworthy, *Caesar* (London: Phoenix, 2007), 227.
[12] Plutarch, *Lives: Caesar*, 7:14.1-2.
[13] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.39 (Ariovistus), 5.37 (Sabinus and Cotta).
[14] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 7.51-52.
[15] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 3.1-6.

Caesar also mentions defeats and setbacks, if not always acknowledging them as such. There are numerous cavalry encounters that result poorly for the Romans, besides larger defeats (such as that of the fourteenth legion recorded above), that are related but could have easily been left out of the narrative entirely. Even in cases where he does not acknowledge defeat, such as in the case of the twelfth legion or Gergovia as discussed above, he makes little effort to hide it, meaning that it is clear to readers that the Romans had been defeated. He also emphasizes that every defeat, no matter how minor, is swiftly avenged, which is standard Roman policy.[16]

One likely reason for this honesty was that Caesar was not the only person reporting back to Rome. Most of his officers and possibly many of his men, to say nothing about merchants and other camp followers, maintained a steady stream of correspondence to friends and relatives back in Rome, giving their own details and versions of events. Cicero's letters to and from his brother are perfect evidence for this regular correspondence.[17] It would have been impossible for Caesar to censor this mail, and any outright falsehood and invention on Caesar's part would have been quickly seized upon by his enemies. Therefore, while Caesar might exaggerate the numbers of enemies and of the slain (a common practice throughout ancient writings), there would be little point in concealing a defeat or close-fought battle.

This would leave Caesar with the problem of how to relate incidents that might make him look bad, since outright lies would be quickly exposed. It appears the solution he came to was simple lack of detail. The account of the final battle of the 55 BCE British expedition, which describes the Romans as ultimately winning with very little

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[16] Adrian Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War, 100BC - AD 200* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 99-100.
[17] See Cicero, *Letters to his Friends* and *Letters to Atticus*.

detail, might well be an example of this.[18] It is still possible to read between the lines, however, and discern a likely scenario. The lack of description could mean that this battle was more closely fought than Caesar claims. Given that he does not shy away from describing other closely-fought battles, however, it is likely this was more of a large-scale skirmish, with neither side being able to engage the other effectively, but providing Caesar with the ability to end the operation with a success. At this time, the Romans had no cavalry to counter the British cavalry, meaning the legions could not safely maneuver on the battlefield. On the other hand, the enemy cavalry could make little impression upon the legion formations and their infantry could not have defeated the ordered legionary formations on their own. In short, neither side could properly engage the other, but the Romans could claim victory simply by remaining in the field and exhausting the opposition. Caesar is even ambiguous about the pursuit, using the phrase 'not a few' in regards to the numbers cut down rather than stating that large numbers were killed.[19] It is likely, then, that casualties on both sides were fairly minor, but the 'battle' allowed Caesar to claim the expedition was a success. By not describing it in detail, he would not make claims contradicted by other reports and open himself to criticism, while at the same time make the operation look as favorable as possible.

To conclude, Caesar's commentaries are a comparatively detailed account of his campaigns. They are, however, written with the intent of making Caesar look as favorable as possible and to answer his critics back in Rome.[20] Caesar is fortunate in that no competing account has survived in any detail, leaving him in the fortunate position of writing his own history. This fact has to be kept in mind when examining the

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[18] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.35. See Chapter 4 for how this battle relates to the wider campaign.
[19] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.35.
[20] H.J. Edwards, *The Gallic War*, xv.

commentaries. They are, however, less obviously biased than those of some other writers

recording their deeds. In 1805, for example, Napoleon produced a history of the Battle of

Marengo (June 14th, 1800), which described a brilliant, decisive victory over the

Austrians under the personal direction of Napoleon.[21] This account is contradicted by

accounts of officers present and Napoleon's own after-action report. In the latter,

Marengo is described as a very close fought action nearly resulting in a French defeat,

with equal losses on both sides and much of the Austrian army escaping. For much of the

battle, the French army was out of Napoleon's control and the decisive move was made

by a subordinate general without any input from Napoleon whatsoever.[22] Compared to

this revisionism, Caesar's commentaries appear as a comparatively honest record.

Caesar's commentaries are the primary source available and thus figure most

prominently in this discussion, but other sources used in this paper need to be addressed

briefly. One useful contemporary source is the letters of the writer and orator Marcus

Tullius Cicero.[23] Cicero maintained a very active correspondence with numerous friends

and acquaintances. Most usefully he corresponded regularly with his brother Quintus, an

officer in Caesar's army and participant in the 54 BCE expeditions to Britain. The letters

serve two uses for this thesis: first, they give us some idea of prevalent attitudes in Rome

in regards to Caesar's activities. Some passages suggest that Cicero was simply

attempting to placate Caesar (he was in political debt to him), although whether Cicero

expected anyone to read his personal correspondence is uncertain.[24] The second use of the

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[21] Owen Connelly, *Blundering to Glory* (Scholarly Resources Inc., 1987), 70.

[22] Connelly, *Blundering to Glory*, 68.

[23] See Cicero, *Letters to his Friends* and *Letters to Atticus*.

[24] Cicero, *Letters to his Friends*, Trans. W. Glynn Williams (London: W. Heinemann, 1965), 2:7.7.2. Cicero states that his friend Trebatius has an extremely generous commander which is either a statement of personal belief or an attempt to curry favour.

letters is in dating.[25] Cicero frequently mentioned the date he received letters, in addition

to the date they were written, thus giving us the ability to date events. This is especially

useful in the case of the 54 BCE expeditions. The main problem with Cicero's letters in

regards to Britain is that they are one-sided; he mentions receiving the letters and gives

his opinion of their contents, but does not discuss their contents in much detail. Sadly,

those incoming letters have not survived, and we are left only with Cicero's brief

summaries and generalizations.

Another primary source, Pytheas' 'On the Ocean', is useful in giving us an idea of

what 'Pre-Caesarian' Mediterranean peoples knew about Britain. While his cultural and

political descriptions were somewhat out of date by Caesar's time, the work likely would

have been useful in providing an overview of the island and its resources. The main

problem is that Pytheas' work has not survived to the present day. Our only option in

attempting to recreate his voyage is to piece together references made to Pytheas' account

in other works. These authors, such as Pliny, Strabo and Polybius, all refer to Pytheas in

their own geographic descriptions. One problem with these repeated citations (some are

second or third-hand) is that they likely have allowed various errors to appear over time,

especially in regards to specific measurements. Pliny's almost ridiculously high tide in

the English Channel is one possible example of this problem.[26] An additional problem is

that some of these sources, principally Polybius and Strabo, distrust or disbelieve

Pytheas' account, for whatever reason.[27] This has served to color academic opinion

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[25] See Chapter 5.
[26] Barry Cunliffe, *The Extraordinary Voyages of Pytheas the Greek* (New York: Walker & Company, 2001), 102, 171.
[27] Cunliffe, *The Extraordinary Voyages of Pytheas the Greek*, 165-167.

against Pytheas, but most scholars now believe that his account, or the references to his account, can be trusted in respect to Britain.[28]

Most of the remaining sources, such as the works of Tacitus, Cassius Dio, and Polybius, are general histories and therefore contain information relevant to their focus, and coloured by the political realities and personal opinions of their time. These writers give us the main literary evidence in regards to Celtic culture and warfare. They depict the Celts with varying degrees of sympathy but in general, Celts and Germans are depicted with common stereotypes: being violent, prideful and generally as un-Greek and un-Roman as possible. These stereotypes colour depictions of Celts in literature, and while some of the descriptions, such as headhunting, are supported by archaeological evidence, we are forced to rely on Roman and Greek authors for most of our evidence on Celtic culture.[29] A Celtic army, for example, might have been more organized or complicated than ancient authors cared to describe. Therefore, as the examination of Celtic warfare in chapter two is heavily based on these ancient sources, the potential biases should be kept in mind.

There are two other sources, whose nature should be briefly explained. The first is the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*.[30] This inscription, found on temple walls in Turkey, is the political will and testament of the Emperor Augustus, summing up the achievements and activities of his reign. The main use of this document for our purposes is in the listing of subordinate kings in Britain, which helps illustrate how Roman supremacy was

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[28] See Holmes, T., *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar* (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1974) and Cunliffe, *The Extraordinary Voyages of Pytheas the Greek*, for in depth discussions on Pytheas and the credibility of his work.
[29] Barry W. Cunliffe, *The Celtic World* (New York: Greenwich House, 1986), 82-83.
[30] Fredrick W. Shipley, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti: Introduction* (London: W. Heinemann, 1924), 333.

acknowledged even when there was no actual occupation.[31] There is always the

possibility, of course, that Augustus was exaggerating his achievements (he mentions the

conquest of Germany to the Elbe, but not its loss), but there is no real reason to doubt him

either.[32] The second, very minor for our purposes, source is Frontinus' *Stratagems*.[33] This

work is a compilation of military strategy, tactics and anecdotes grouped by theme rather

than narrative. Many of the events listed occurred centuries before the compilation was

written, and there is an obvious chance for errors to have been made. This source was

only used to provide a possible explanation for the ascension of Commius as king of the

British Atrebates.[34] The disagreement with Hirtius's account of the matter will be

discussed in the main text. These are the main primary sources used for this thesis, and

their limitations and benefits should be kept in mind throughout the ensuing discussion.

In terms of secondary scholarship, the conclusions reached by writers examining

Caesars' British expeditions tend to vary according to the author's own opinion. Many

secondary sources do not examine the invasions in detail, merely classifying them as

successes or failures based on their own perception of Caesar's military objective.

Instead, there is a tendency to treat the 55 and 54 BCE invasions as either a minor

occurrence in Caesar's career or a simple prelude to the 43 CE invasion. Still, a number

of authors do consider Caesars' wider motives in evaluating the success or failure of the

invasions. The general consensus is that Caesar inflicted a tactical defeat on the Britons,

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[31] Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti*, Trans. Fredrick W. Shipley (London: W. Heinemann, 1924), 5.31-32.

[32] Fredrick W. Shipley, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti: Introduction*, 338. Augustus either ignored the issue or wrote the document prior to the loss of Germany.

[33] C.E. Bennett, *The Stratagems, and the Aqueducts of Rome: Introduction* (London: W. Heinemann, 1925), xix.

[34] Frontinus, *The Stratagems, and the Aqueducts of Rome*, Trans. Charles E. Bennett (London: W. Heinemann, 1925), 2.13.11.

although the exact level and severity vary, and he did not financially benefit. Otherwise, conclusions vary with opinions about both the evidence and Caesar's primary motive.

Some authors consider the invasions primarily as a political success. Frere, for example, explains that Caesar achieved his political objectives and neutralized the island. He was, however, not able to make more out of the success due to the Gallic revolts and was not serious about occupying the island.[35] Peddie, on the other hand, considered the treaty with Cassivellaunus a political success, but also that it was as much a face saving gesture made in recognition of a failed campaign.[36] He also implies that Caesar was more concerned with opening the island to Roman trade than he was with occupying it. This opinion is shared by Mattingly who, in his brief account, also believes that the invasion was a political success in establishing stable client kingdoms, but that all other objectives failed miserably.[37] Finally, Brady believes that the invasions were both militarily and politically successful and that Caesar never intended to fully occupy the island. He does not, however, address the wealth and propaganda motives.[38]

Other scholars consider the invasions to have been an outright failure in every possible way except perhaps propaganda. Webster, for example, believes that Caesar failed to achieve any of his objectives and that the island remained a point of instability.[39] Likewise, Goldsworthy considers the invasions to be militarily, politically and financially unsuccessful, but of great propaganda value to Caesar.[40] Finally, Holmes also considers

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[35] Sheppard Frere, *Britannia : A History of Roman Britain* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1967), 38-39.

[36] John Peddie, *Conquest: The Roman Invasion of Britain* (New York: St. Martins Press, 1987), 14-15.

[37] David Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession: Britain in the Roman Empire* (London: Penguin Books, 2007), 67.

[38] S. G. Brady, "Caesar and Britain," *The Classical Journal* 47, No 8 (May, 1952), 315.

[39] Graham Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain* (New Jersey: Barnes & Noble Books, 1980), 40.

[40] Goldsworthy*, Caesar*, 352.

the invasions to have failed, instead, citing Tacitus, leaving the island as a legacy for the Romans to occupy at a later date. He also states that Caesar was severely criticized by contemporary and later Romans for not occupying the island.[41] However, the primary sources he cites for this do not, in this scholar's opinion, support this particular assertion. This is a very simplified summary of these authors' arguments but, as will be seen, this author's conclusions that the invasions were politically successful but strategic, financial and partial propaganda failures are generally in line with the opinions of other scholars.

Before moving on to the discussion of the invasions, however, some background information regarding the nature and population of the island and a brief description of the Celtic military will be provided.

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[41] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 355-356. Cornelius Tacitus, *Agricola*, Trans. M. Hutton (London: W. Heinemann, 1914), 13.

Chapter 2: Pre-Roman Britain

Precise details about Britain in 55 BCE on the eve of Caesar's invasions appear to have been relatively unknown to both the Romans and the wider Mediterranean sphere (at the time). At the same time, however, the island was relatively densely populated and was an integral part of a European trade network. Unfortunately, there are next to no written sources by the pre-Roman inhabitants themselves, and relevant writings of contemporary Mediterranean cultures are uncertain at best. For details on the history of the islands, we are dependent on archaeology, coinage and local traditions. This chapter will (attempt to) provide an examination of the relevant terrain of the southeastern portion of the island, an overview of the settlement history of the island from the Iron Age to the Roman invasions, and finally an overview of the known interactions of the island population with the outside world. Finally, the chapter will briefly describe the Celtic military establishment in order to provide context. For the sake of simplicity, it will generally use modern place names for localities.

The most obvious and striking feature about Britain is that it is an island separated from northern France and Belgium by a channel 34 kilometers wide at the narrowest, to 241 kilometers at the widest.[42] Up until the present day, the channel has served as both a conduit for trade as well as a barrier to invading forces. Therefore, any attempt to approach the island in ancient times had to come by sea and take into account the conditions of the winds and tides. While the island as a whole possesses a wide variety of landforms, the south-eastern portion of the island, roughly modern Kent and the Thames basin, was the arena of engagement during Caesar's invasions, and will therefore be the main focus here (see Fig. 1). This region is bounded by the river Thames to the north and

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[42] Encyclopædia Britannica, 2007., s.v. "English Channel."

the channel to the south. In the west, the region is bordered by the Romney Marsh (at the border of Kent and modern East Sussex), a wide reclaimed piece of terrain which was, at best, a swamp in Roman times.[43] From the marsh, the coast runs east, gradually turning north-east until it reaches a promontory known as the North Foreland (at the time the Isle of Thanet separated from Britain by the Wantsum channel), whereupon the coast abruptly turns west and runs into the Thames estuary.[44] The most outstanding feature of this coastline is the high chalk cliffs, exposed by centuries of erosion. Any assault against these cliffs would be impractical at best. Other regions of the coast, comparatively level and sloping into the sea, are more suitable for military operations, notably around Deal and in the west around the Romney Marsh.[45] There are also a number of ports and harbours, most notably Dover, well protected by chalk cliffs.[46]

Inland, the region possesses two main river systems besides the Thames. The Stour flows from the south central portion of the region, passing through Canterbury before emptying into the channel around modern Richborough.[47] The Stour consists of a number of tributaries which amalgamate before reaching the sea. The river was navigable for trade and military supplies, and was apparently easily fordable, as Caesar makes no mention of any difficulties in crossing it once the opposition had been driven away. The second river system is the Medway in west Kent. This system consists, like the Stour, of a number of tributaries which amalgamate and empty into the Thames estuary at Rochester.[48] Again, this river was navigable for trade and military supplies but not overly large or fast flowing. The Medway is not mentioned at all by Caesar, implying that he

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[43] Henry Rees, *The British Isles* (London: George G. Harrap & Co. Ltd.,1966), 308-309.
[44] Rees, *The British Isles*, 309.
[45] T. R. Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 519-532.
[46] Rees, *The British Isles*, 321-322.
[47] See Figure 1
[48] Rees, *The British Isles*, 307, 387.

faced no opposition in its crossing, but it was the site of a major battle during Claudius's invasion in 43 CE.[49] A final river which needs to be discussed is the Thames, marking, as stated, the northern boundary of Kent. This river was much wider than the other two but the Romans do not seem to have encountered exceptional difficulties in fording it on any occasion, even in the face of opposition. The Thames was, and still is, a major artery of trade and would be the site of the main trading port in England under the Romans and subsequent rulers, London.[50]

The terrain in the region is marked by ridges and valleys caused by the erosion of softer clay layers that lie between harder chalk ones.[51] This gives the terrain an overall rolling appearance with numerous hills and depressions. The climate of Kent is very warm, warmer than Gaul according to Caesar, leading to a diverse variety of flora, including, in modern times, fruit trees.[52] In the periods under discussion, the region was described as being densely populated and therefore heavily cultivated and pastoral. Despite this cultivation, the region was much more heavily forested than in modern times, many of the trees having been since removed for both pasture land and cultivation in more recent times.[53] These treed areas were sufficient for the Britons, as will be seen, to use them as cover in waging an effective guerilla campaign. There was also enough open terrain, possibly cleared for pasture or naturally clear due to underlying chalk, for both cavalry and chariots to operate, impossible in the close confines of a forest. There was, in addition to navigable rivers, something of a (very) rough road network which

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[49] Cassius Dio, *Roman History,* 9 vols. Trans, Earnest Cary (London: W. Heinemann, 1914-1927), 7:60.20.

[50] Rees, *The British Isles*, 340. (See Fig. 1 map for course of these river systems.)

[51] Rees, *The British Isles*, 305.

[52] Rees, *The British Isles*, 314. Julius Caesar, *The Gallic War,* 5.12.

[53] Rees, *The British Isles*, 312.

facilitated trade, and many Roman roads, such as what came to be known as Watling Street (a major road across the island), possibly followed these paths.[54]

The relevant period for this discussion, which lasted into the Roman occupation, is the Iron Age (roughly 750-43 BCE). This period saw two separate waves of migration: around 600 BCE, Celtic peoples, called the Brythons, migrated to the island, possibly bringing iron-working with them, and by 500 BCE they occupied most of the island.[55] Some scholars hesitate to use the term 'Celt' for the inhabitants of Britain at this time, theorizing instead that ideas and technology were introduced through trade to the island natives.[56] Place and tribal names do suggest, however, that a form of Celtic language was spoken at the time, although whether due to cultural osmosis or conquest is unknown.[57] For their part, the Romans considered the inhabitants of Britain to be Celtic. This culture was marked by elaborate art and grave goods and endemic warfare, leading to a large number of hill-forts. Caesar writes of these peoples occupying the interior of the island and considering themselves as indigenous.[58]

Some time in the second century BCE, a final wave of immigrants began to arrive. This group originated from the Belgic territory in northwestern Gaul and shared tribal names with those in the Belgic territories on the continent. Caesar claims that this group occupied the maritime portion of Britain; he presumably meant Kent and perhaps the mouth of the Thames estuary.[59] He writes that they first came as seaborne raiders prior to settling. If Caesar is correct, why the Belgae turned from raiding to settling is

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[54] Rees, *The British Isles*, 61, 382.
[55] Frere, *Britainnia,* 13.
[56] Timothy C. Darvell, *Prehistoric Britain* (London: Taylor and Francis, 1987), 156. See chapter 3 for a definition of 'Celt'.
[57] H. D. Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World* (Beckenham: Croom Helm Ltd., 1987), 214.
[58] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.12.
[59] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.12.

unknown. One possibility is that the Belgae were pressured by folk movements, such as

the violent migration of the Cimbri and Teutoni through Gaul in the late second century

BCE, and sought a means of escape.[60] Another possibility is that population pressure

forced the Belgae to seek an outlet for their surplus people through raiding.[61] At some

point, according to Caesar, the raiding warrior bands, having defeated local rulers, appear

to have simply decided to send for their families and settle, a similar situation to the

Anglo-Saxons centuries later.[62] It is likely that the Brythionic population in the region

was not totally displaced, but instead came under the rule of a Belgic elite, and cultural

differences were likely not too extreme.

The study of relevant coinage agrees with the raiding/conquest theory. The

earliest Gallo-Belgic coins, found in large numbers in Kent, were minted in Gaul.[63] Later

coins of a similar design, minted in Britain, have been discovered from sites along the

southern coast. The Belgae maintained close links with their brethren across the channel

and, so Caesar claims, in living memory Diviacus, a king of the Suessones, had held

power in Britain as well as Gaul.[64] In addition, Caesar's nominal excuse for invading

Britain was that Britons had participated in the revolt of the Belgae in 57 BCE. This

period saw extensive trade links between Britain and the European mainland and the

Mediterranean region.[65] As mentioned, the Britons in Kent at least were using bronze

and gold coins, whereas elsewhere on the island iron bars were in use as currency. Caesar

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[60] Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World*, 214.
[61] Frere, *Britannia*, 20, 380.
[62] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.12. Frere, *Britannia*, 379-380.
[63] Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession*, 69.
[64] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 2.4.
[65] Darvell, *Prehistoric Britain*, 164.

also records the population as being rather dense, with farms arranged in patterns similar

to those on the continent and possessing large numbers of cattle. [66]

Britain was certainly known to the inhabitants of Europe from a very early time.

People had been able to reach the island for thousands of years with little or no difficulty,

even after the island was permanently separated from Europe. Local continental peoples

would have been aware of the island due to the simple fact that it could be seen from the

coast of Gaul, in the area around what is now Calais. Attempting to determine how much

the peoples from the Mediterranean region knew about the island is far more difficult.

We are generally dependent on written sources for our information, but these are

fragmentary at best. Archaeological evidence is also problematic, for the reason that

Mediterranean peoples were more interested in obtaining raw material from northern

Europe, while, conversely, the goods produced in the Mediterranean region were handled

by peoples serving as middlemen in their transportation along the trade routes, instead of

being traded directly.[67] It is possible, however, through careful interpretation of the

available sources, to determine some idea of what the Romans and Greeks knew about

Britain.

There is no doubt that Mediterranean peoples were aware of the island's

existence.[68] Several pre-Caesarian sources mention the island, and Caesar himself simply

mentions Britain in association with various topics, not bothering to elaborate on what

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[66] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.12.
[67] Cunliffe. *The Extraordinary Voyages of Pytheas the Greek,* 67. Darvell, *Prehistoric Britain*, 164.
[68] Plutarch, *Lives: Caesar*, 7:23.3. Plutarch claims that, despite all evidence to the contrary, some writers in his time denied that the island even existed and that Caesar made the whole thing up. One commentator likens this attitude to modern conspiracy theories regarding faked Moon Landings. http://penelope.uchicago.edu/Thayer/E/Roman/Texts/Plutarch/Lives/Caesar*.html#noteA

Britain was.[69] The inference is that he expected his audience to have known that Britain was an island without having to explicitly state this fact. It could also be argued, of course, that he expected his readers to come to that conclusion due to subsequent mentions of ports and ships. This would, however, be somewhat out of character, especially as he was careful to make himself clear in other respects. The first paragraph of the first book of his commentaries, for example, details what he perceived as the cultural make-up of Gaul, including relative river locations and cultural boundaries.[70] It is, then, possible and maybe even probable that the existence of Britain as an island was fairly widely known but, from Caesar's own writing, there appear to have been almost no specific geographical or cultural details known about the island, at least any that Caesar found useful or relevant to include. Another reason for believing the island to be known to the Romans was that Cicero, in his letters to his brother serving in Caesar's army, was excited at the prospect of invading it, and eagerly waiting for details.[71]

How this knowledge (or the lack of it) came to the Mediterranean will now be examined. The simplest explanation is that word of the existence of Britain was passed by word of mouth along trade routes. The tin mines of Cornwall were very important in the metal trade and were apparently still notable in the first century BCE when Diodorus was writing, or in the mid to late fourth century BCE when Pytheas, Diodorus' source, visited the island.[72] The mines are described as the termini of a (mostly) overland trade

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[69]   Diodorus, *The Library of History*, 12 vols. Trans. C.H. Oldfather (London W. Heinemann, 1933-67), 3:5.21.
        Polybius, *The Histories,* 6 vols. Trans. W.R. Paton (London: W. Heinemann, 1922-1927), 6:34.5. Polybius is criticizing Pytheas' claims.
        Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 2.4. A Belgic king exercised sovereignty over Britain as well as parts of Gaul.
[70] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.1.
[71] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Letters to his Friends*: (*Letters to his Brother Quintus*), 3:2.16.4.
[72] Diodorus. *The Library of History*, 3:5.22.1.

network. Tin ingots were traded to coastal merchants who traded them to inland merchants in Gaul and so on, until they reached their destination in the Mediterranean region. This was most likely Massilia (Marseilles) and other Greek colonies located in southern Gaul and northern Spain. The Greeks would then ship the tin onwards to buyers who needed it or used it as a gift or tribute. In the opposite direction, luxury goods such as wine, pottery and jewellery (all having been found at various pre-Roman sites in southern Britain) travelled back to Britain.[73] It is perfectly reasonable to assume that, if asked, a merchant could claim that the tin originated from an island to the north. A more problematic issue was that Cornwall was not the only major source of tin on the Atlantic seaboard. There were large mines in Galicia in Spain which were very well known, and a merchant or manufacturer at the end of the line could easily assume that his tin originated there.[74] While this theory could account for the general knowledge of Britain, there is better evidence that there was some concrete knowledge available regarding the island.

The best evidence for Mediterranean knowledge of Britain is to be found in the writings of Pytheas, a Greek explorer originating from Massilia.[75] At some point in the mid-to-late fourth century BCE, Pytheas journeyed into northern Europe collecting geographic, cultural and astronomical data. He is believed to have reached Britain at least, and possibly voyaged around the mouth of the Baltic and possibly to Iceland (what he calls Thule). He recorded his journey in a work commonly entitled 'On the Ocean' mentioned by later writers, although the exact title of the work varies with the author citing it.[76] Unfortunately, this work has not survived, and we must depend on details and

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[73] Darvell, *Prehistoric Britain*, 164.
[74] Cunliffe, *The Extraordinary Voyages of Pytheas the Greek*, 54.
[75] Cunliffe. *The Extraordinary Voyages of Pytheas the Greek*, 1.
[76]   Cunliffe, *The Extraordinary Voyages of Pytheas the Greek*, 3.

quoted passages contained in the works of writers such as Pliny and Diodorus of Sicily, who indicate that Pytheas was considered by some to be a reliable source in his day. On the other hand, Pytheas' account was, as mentioned, disbelieved by the historian Polybius and the geographer Strabo.[77] The modern consensus is, however, that he indeed made the trip and at the very least reached Britain.

Pytheas appears to have spent considerable time sailing around Britain. Diodorus claims that Pytheas circumnavigated the island, describing it in the shape of a triangle with the points being Belerium, Kantion and Orkas (Cornwall, Kent and the Orkneys).[78] Pytheas apparently landed at numerous points to take measurements of latitude. He observed and conversed with the natives at those points, recording their habits and resources (grain, minerals, livestock etc.) along with tidal, solar, and lunar measurements.[79]

As mentioned, many writers (whether they believed his writings or not) used Pytheas or a source that used Pytheas' writings in their own works, and copies of 'On the Ocean' itself were still extant in Roman times. In book five of his commentaries, Caesar briefly describes Britain in a similar manner to Diodorus, and thus Pytheas, but does not say where he got this information.[80] Given the reluctance of coastal merchants to divulge anything (as will be seen), and a lack of any mention of a scout ship, it is likely that Caesar was using another source. The best one available that we know about would be Pytheas. Another possibility is that Caesar only consulted 'On the Ocean' or a related source in order to fill in geographic details when composing book five after his

[77] Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo,* 8 vols. Trans. Horace Leonard Jones (London: W. Heinemann, 1917-33), 2:3.2.11, 2:3.4.4 (on Pytheas' false representations), 2:4.2.1 (quoting Polybius). See Vol. 1 book 2.4 for a more detailed critic by Strabo and Polybius.
[78]   Diodorus. *The Library of History*, 3:5.21.3-4.
[79]   Cunliffe, *The Extraordinary Voyages of Pytheas the Greek*, 101-102.
[80]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.13. Diodorus, *Library of History*, 3:5.21.3-6.

expeditions. While this theory would mean that Caesar was operating blind, so to speak, it would also indicate that the knowledge was extant somewhere in the Roman world. The descriptions of climate, weather, tides and resources, at the very least, would have been useful in the initial planning stages of his invasions.

The combination of rumour carried along with trade goods, and more concrete information preserved in Pytheas and later authors, would mean that the Mediterranean peoples were generally aware of Britain as an island to the north of Europe. This island, which possessed extensive mineral resources, was known to be inhabited by a Celtic people with a similar culture to that found in Gaul, but other details on most aspects of the island were absent or obsolete in this conception of Britain. To Caesar, then, the island would have been largely unknown but with substantial possibilities.

The Britons which the Romans proposed to attack were, as seen, relatively recent Celtic immigrants. The word Celt is a general term, originating from Greek, used by modern scholars for a culture grouping which originated in central Europe during the Iron Age, around the 8th to 6th centuries BCE. This group spread (either through migration or diffusion) across much of western Europe, the Balkans and Britain, with forays into Italy, Greece and the Middle East.[81] By the time the Romans first encountered them, during Brennus' invasion of Italy and subsequent sack of Rome (around 387 BCE), the Celts had divided into several sub-groupings, including Gauls, Celtiberians, Belgae, and 'Insular Celts' located on Britain.[82] The tribe was the main element of these subgroups and the one most often addressed by ancient writers. The tribes were, however, divided into familial clans to which a tribesman owed his immediate allegiance, and the clan was

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[81]   Haywood, *The Celts: Bronze Age to New Age* (London: Pearson Education ltd., 2004), 12, 17, ix (map of Celtic territorial expansion).
[82]   Haywood, *The Celts*, 22-23 (Sack of Rome), 5.

believed to be responsible for protecting individuals. These clans would be ruled by a

chief or king, with the wider tribe being controlled by an over-king or chief (the terms are

used interchangeably).[83]

No Celtic or British tribe employed a regular military as we or the Romans would

understand it. Modern western society and the Romans of the late Republic both

considered the military, with some exceptions in regards to higher leadership, to be

largely distinct from general society.[84] In other words, soldiers and civilians were

considered distinct entities. Members of a Celtic tribe, on the other hand, would not have

maintained this distinction.[85] They would consider themselves to be warriors even when

home tending their fields or livestock. At the same time, Celts held a strong sense of their

own tribal, clan and personal liberty. Many revolts and wars are recorded by the Romans

as being motivated by a threat to Gallic liberty.[86] This combination of independent

attitude and warrior mentality was at the heart of the organization of a tribal army of the

sort which confronted the Romans on numerous occasions.

A tribal army could be of variable size depending on the scale of the engagement

and the size of the participating tribe. It appears that the army would be headed by the

tribal chieftain. Under him there would be sub-kings with their own retainers. Common

warriors would likely remain in their clan groupings with whatever weapons they

possessed, usually inferior to those of the elites.[87] A powerful tribe could expect

detachments from subordinate tribes and could create very large armies, running into tens

of thousands of warriors. The Nervii, for example, according to Caesar, assembled

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[83]   Haywood, *The Celts*, 35.
[84]   Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War,* 1-2.
[85]   Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 56.
[86]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 7.4. In this case Vercingetorix rallies support with this argument and casts his opponents out of his tribe, enabling him to begin to form his pan-Gallic alliance.
[87]   Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 56, 59.

roughly 60,000 warriors, which constituted the bulk of the tribe's fighting strength, to

attack the Romans at the battle of the Sabis in 57 BCE.[88]

A large external threat, such as the Romans, could encourage a number of tribes

to combine against it. This appears to have been more likely if the tribes were part of a

common cultural grouping, such as the Belgae. This sort of army would be commanded

by an individual elected by common consent of the tribal leadership, a man who would

likely be either extremely charismatic, possess great prestige due to age or military

achievements, or simply lead the strongest tribal contingent present. Subordinate

commanders would have been chiefs of their own tribal contingents, with the sub-chiefs

in clan detachments.[89] An intertribal army could become very large depending on the size

of the contributing tribal contingents. The pan-Gallic army that sought to relieve

Vercingetorix at Alesia numbered roughly 250,000 warriors, according to Caesar, in

addition to a reputed 80,000 besieged in the town itself.[90] This size of army, although

formidable, brought with it a host of problems, as will be discussed. In addition, due to

the general rivalry between tribes, some could almost always be counted on to side with

the invaders, and comparatively nonexistent supply arrangements made large armies

comparatively rare.

Again the source limitations and biases need to be kept in mind in this discussion.

The focus of a Celtic warrior, at least as depicted in Roman sources, was heroic

individual combat in which he would demonstrate his skill and prowess.[91] The common

modern perception of Celtic warfare, the great barbarian infantry charge, allowed

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[88]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 2.28.
[89]   Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 57.
[90]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 7.71, 7.75. Again these numbers are probably exaggerated.
[91]   Penrose, *Rome and her Enemies: An Empire Created and Destroyed by War* (Oxford: Osprey
Publishing, 2005), 140.

warriors to rapidly close with the enemy and engage in melee combat, while requiring

relatively little tactical skill from the warriors. The army would stream in a disorganized

mass against its opponents and either overwhelm them with sheer numbers or be

decimated by the more disciplined enemy.[92] The glory of personal victory would help

establish the warrior's place in society. Their skills would be continually practiced

through early training and intertribal raiding, although the regularity with which a warrior

might participate in raids is unknown.[93] The higher classes participated more regularly in

raiding and warfare, as it served as the basis of their wealth and authority, and they

therefore possessed more skill overall.[94] Regardless, Celtic warriors generally showed no

hesitation to fight if given the opportunity. Melee combat tactics were designed to defeat

the enemy through sword play. [95]

Some writers, such as Tacitus, describe a more organized military formation,

especially among the Germans as opposed to the Celts. This consisted of a closely packed

phalanx with overlapping shields. On the offensive, they would adopt a wedge formation

to punch holes in enemy lines.[96] It is possible that the more warlike nature of the German

tribes allowed them to more properly organize their military, as compared to the more

civilized Gauls. By the time of the Gallic Wars, Caesar reports that the Germans were

militarily superior to the Gauls in all respects.[97] It can also be claimed that the Germans

were able to adopt these complex formations due to a century of prolonged experience

fighting the Romans. However, at the time of the Gallic Wars, other peoples, such as the

Helvetii, also are described as employing pseudo-phalanx tactics, although it is difficult

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[92] Haywood, *The Celts*, 47.

[93] Penrose, *Rome and her Enemies*, 134.

[94] Penrose, *Rome and her Enemies*, 134.

[95] Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, 2:4.4.2.

[96] Tacitus, *Germania,* Trans. M. Hutton (London: W. Heinemann, 1914), 1.5.

[97] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 6.24.

to determine their extent among the general Celtic tribes.[98] Regardless, this phalanx-type formation was still clumsy and unwieldy when compared to that of the legions, and likely could not have maintained cohesion during an advance.

Celtic tribes could also be quite skilled at skirmishing and ambush. Caesar describes the Britons, for example, inflicting heavy losses on his pickets, and using comparatively complex tactics, including functional reserves and covering units.[99] This type of strategy was aided by intimate local knowledge of the terrain possessed by local tribes as opposed to that possessed by the invaders. Knowledge of terrain features and woodland paths enabled locals to plan ambushes in advance, a more defensive strategy. This strategy was doubly effective against the Romans, as the legions could generally not maneuver quickly or safely through heavily wooded terrain and their cavalry was neutralized, allowing hit-and-run attacks to be generally less risky than otherwise would be the case.[100] It is not clear how these ambushes or skirmishing raids were organized and commanded, especially the relatively complex British skirmishing maneuvers mentioned above. Against the Romans therefore, a Celtic victory generally depended on three factors: superior numbers, surprise, and favourable terrain.

The equipment of a Celtic warrior depended a great deal on social standing and wealth. Common infantry would be almost completely unarmoured, with some writers claiming they fought naked, although this is believed by some to have been part of a religious rite, a ritual purification and sacrifice of the defeated.[101] Polybius, however, when describing one tribe at the battle of Telamon (225 BCE), gives a more practical

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[98]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.1, 1.24. The Helvetii have been termed both Celtic and Germanic by various writers. Caesar, for example considered them Gallic and in opposition to the Germans. If they were Germanic this might explain their use of the Phalanx.
[99]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.16.
[100]   Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 53.
[101]   Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World*, 69.

excuse for nakedness. The Gaesatae, he states, shed their clothes in a display of confidence and a belief that they would be able to move easier in the undergrowth, with the battle going understandingly badly for them.[102] Most depictions, however, show the Celts wearing leather trousers and shirt, and perhaps a helmet, either leather or metal.[103] In addition, Celts would carry a shield of varying materials and styles. Some are described as being full body shields, others circular, and others smaller target types.[104] They were constructed from wood and hide or wicker, commonly used by the Britons. Some examples of metal Celtic shields have been found, most notably the Battersea shield dredged out of the Thames. This shield, however, an intricately designed plate that would have been mounted on a wood backing, was not suitable for combat, and was likely a decorative ceremonial votive offering.[105] Shields of the above materials could be intricately decorated, and were generally as protective as the Romans' own shield design. The lack of body protection required common warriors to place all their defensive reliance on the shield. This was unfortunate, as a Roman battle typically opened with a barrage of projectiles designed to embed themselves in shields and render them too unwieldy for further use, leaving the warriors practically defenseless.[106] Some warriors painted designs on their own bodies for ceremonial or intimidation purposes. Caesar specifically mentions that the Britons painted themselves with *virtum*, a term which is often translated as woad but could also mean some type of metal-based pigment.[107] The fact that he felt this was worth mentioning would seem to indicate that this practice was

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[102]   Polybius, *The Histories*, 1:2.28.7-8.
[103]   Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History*, 5:5.30.1.
[104]   Diodorus Siculus, *The Library of History*, 5:5.30.2 (Evidence for Long Shields), Polybius, *The Histories*, 2.30.3 (Evidence for Smaller Shields).
[105] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 78.
[106]   Penrose, *Rome and her Enemies*, 139.
[107]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.14.

unknown or uncommon on the continent, or that Caesar was simply attempting to depict the Britons as being as exotic and non-Roman as possible.

The wealthiest and higher-status individuals could be much better equipped, the best being roughly equivalent to a legionary of that time. The biggest advantage was actual armour in the form of chain mail.[108] This type of armour gives excellent protection against slicing or thrusting, but is less effective against blunt trauma. It was, however, expensive and time-consuming to manufacture. This, in addition to its relative rarity in the archaeological record, reinforces the fact that only the most elite warriors would have been able to equip themselves with this type of armour. It is likely that leather or cloth would have been commonly used as protection by most warriors.[109] Metal helmets, by some accounts intricately decorated, appear to have been more common than the mail, but still rare enough in the archaeological record that the elites would have been the ones using them.[110] In other respects, the equipment of higher-class warriors would have been similar to that of the lower classes, simply of higher quality and of a more elaborate design. Cavalry equipment was similar to that of the infantry, based on class and wealth. The saddle was a four horned design that provided a firm seat despite the absence of stirrups, and was also employed by the Romans.[111] It is unlikely that the horses possessed any armour based on the lack of archaeological evidence for it.

The iron sword appears to have been the primary weapon of elite Celtic warriors. There are a wide variety of designs and different lengths to be found throughout the Celtic world. The designs encountered in Gaul and Britain were, in general, long thin

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[108]   Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 5:5.30.3.
[109]   Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 5:5.30.1. Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 59.
[110]   Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 5:5.30.2.
        [111] Phillip Sidnell, *Warhorse: Cavalry in Ancient Warfare* (London: Hambleton Continiuum, 2006), 228.

swords, about one meter long, with the hilt being made of some organic matter such as wood or bone. The length of these weapons indicates they were primarily designed as slashing weapons, and therefore required a relatively large amount of fighting space to make an effective swing.[112] In his account of the Battle of Mons Graupius in 84 CE, Tacitus claims that the Celtic long swords lacked points, further reinforcing their role as slashing weapons. Therefore, these swords were intended more for single combat and, as ever, the close-range thrusting tactics of the heavily armored Romans generally placed the Celts at a disadvantage.[113] The quality of these swords appears to be variable. Some writers, such as Polybius, describe the iron of being of such poor quality that the swords bent on the first impact, requiring them to be manually straightened by stepping on them.[114] Some scholars, citing the extensive iron-forging heritage of the Celts and the quality of other iron weapons (some approaching steel), claim that the ancient writers misinterpreted a ceremonial 'decommissioning' of a used sword. These bent swords have been found in presumed sacred deposits. In addition, scholars have pointed out that not all forging is equal, and even high-quality weapons can fail if frequently used. This author is of the opinion that, while some swords undoubtedly did break in combat, it is unlikely that the mass failure of swords that Polybius describes was due to poor quality. This is especially the case if, as described below, swords were reserved for the elites who would ensure that they had high quality weapons. In any event, the weapons of the elites, like their equipment in general, would be of high quality and possess elaborate ornamentation, and thus be less likely to break or bend in combat.

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[112]   Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 5:5.30.4.
[113]   Tacitus, *Agricola*, 36.
[114]   Polybius, *The Histories*, 1:2.33.3.

The relative expense of manufacturing swords has led some scholars to speculate that the spear was actually the primary weapon of common warriors, and that swords were reserved mainly for elites. The primary support for this theory is that spears are cheaper and easier to manufacture and do not require continuous practice to wield effectively, as much of the warrior population would not be constantly fighting. Diodorus describes the standard Gallic spear as possessing a head 1 cubit long (45 centimeters). The shaft would have been about two meters in length. Shorter throwing spears and javelins would also have been used.[115] The prevalence of spears over swords is debated. Scholars favouring widespread use of swords claim that manufacturing many low quality weapons is perfectly feasible, as is maintaining high quality weapons over generations. It is likely, though, that warriors would use a spear or sword in accordance with their own resources and inclination, or use both at once. Tacitus, for example, claims that the Germans were so metal-poor that they had by necessity recourse to spears.[116] Many ancient writers, unfortunately, do not make it clear what social class is using what weapons when describing them.[117]

As mentioned, Celtic warriors used a variety of missile weapons, including javelins, slings and arrows. A javelin is a light spear designed to be thrown one-handed. They could be a variety of sizes, ranging from throwing spears to small darts. In general, they were metal-tipped and weighted so that the strength of the impact would be at the point. This type of weapon was widely used throughout the ancient world (the Roman version, known as the *pilum*, will be discussed in the next chapter.) Javelins were used to

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[115]   Diodorus Siculus, *Library of History*, 5:5.30.4. These weapons would require some practice but regular hunting would help with this somewhat.
[116]   Tacitus, *Germania*, 1.5.
[117]   Polybius, *The Histories*, 1:2.33.4. Polybius describes Roman tactics being designed to take advantage of the limitations of Celtics swords, implying that they were the primary weapons.

disrupt and injure opposing formations and were frequently used by Celts on horseback or in chariots. They are also mentioned as being used by skirmishing forces in loose order, in an effort to support cavalry or harass the Romans.[118] Archery appears to have been rarer, and is largely mentioned in the context of defending fortifications. Some sources claim that the reason for this is that it was not considered to be as honorable to use a ranged weapon such as a bow, instead of engaging in close combat.[119] However, Caesar, among others, implies that the Gauls actually had a large number of archers, and they were more common than previously believed.[120]

One military instrument employed by the Britons, and apparently unique to Britain at the time of the Gallic wars, was the chariot. Earlier writers, such as Polybius and Diodorus, describe continental Celts employing chariots both for transport and battle in the 3rd century BCE, but by the 1st century BCE the vehicle apparently fell out of use on the continent due to general ineffectiveness against the organized infantry formations of the Greeks and Romans, and had been replaced by cavalry.[121] The Celtic chariot was a two-horse, two-man vehicle with a driver and a warrior.[122] As described by Caesar, the chariot would pass across the enemy line with the warrior throwing javelins and insults, hopefully disrupting the enemy formations and causing fear with the noise, dust and general presence of the large, fast moving vehicle. At an appropriate moment, the warrior would jump off to engage the enemy while the chariot, screened by the cavalry, withdrew some distance and turned around. When he was hard-pressed or exhausted, the warrior

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[118]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.24, 7.80.
[119]   Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 60.
[120]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 7.31.
[121]   Polybius, *The Histories*, 1:2.28.4. Chariots positioned on the wings of the Gallic army at Battle of Telamon, 225 BCE. Diodorus, *Library of History*, 5:5.29.1. Celtic chariots in general.
[122]   Frere, *Britannia*, 35.

would be free to remount the chariot and ride off to safety.[123] The limitations of this style

of fighting are common with chariot warfare in general; a chariot requires specific

conditions, relatively even terrain, and enough room to maneuver in order to operate

effectively. In addition, anything a chariot does can generally be done by cavalry faster

and cheaper.[124] It is unknown why Caesar found chariots still in use on the island when

they had gone out of use on the mainland. It is likely that that chariots were used by the

Brythions as symbols of power in addition to a weapon of war, at the time of the Belgic

migration, and were later adopted by the newcomers to serve the same purpose.[125] It is

also possible that Caesar arrived as the chariot was gradually being phased out: he

repeatedly mentions close cooperation between chariots and cavalry, indicating that the

Britons did not consider chariots an independent branch.[126]

There are a number of examples of chariots which have been excavated from

burial sites throughout East Yorkshire in Britain which provide an excellent idea of how

they looked and performed.[127] They were, as mentioned, designed for two horses and

measure approximately two meters in width and four meters in length (including the

yoke). The wheel rims were composed of one piece of iron surrounding a multispoke

wheel. Aside from the rims and iron fittings for the hub, the rest of the vehicle was

constructed of wood (the base), leather (holding various parts together), and wickerwork

(the frame).[128] The back and front of the platform was open, allowing the warrior to easily

mount and dismount and, according to Caesar, the driver to perform acrobatics along the

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[123]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.33. Caesar provides the only detailed descriptions of chariot warfare.
[124]   Sidnell, *Warhorse*, 12-15.
[125]   Frere, *Britannia*, 14.
[126]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.33. The chariots pass between troops of friendly cavalry, with the latter protecting the flanks of the former from opposing cavalry and light infantry.
[127]   Darvell, *Prehistoric Britain*, 158.
[128]   Haywood, *The Celts*, 46.

yoke as a demonstration of his prowess.[129] This design was thus relatively light-weight

and well-suited to serve as a highly maneuverable battle taxi, but required experienced

horses and a well-trained driver. Building and maintaining the vehicle, along with

keeping the horses (plus possible spares) and driver, meant that only the wealthiest and

most prominent warriors of a clan or tribe could afford chariots which, in turn, meant that

they were as much of a symbol of wealth as a weapon of war. Cassivellaunus, with

representatives from all his dependants and allies, is said to have ultimately possessed a

force of roughly 4,000 charioteers during Caesar's second invasion.[130] Depending on

whether this term refers to the entire chariot crew or simply the warrior, we get a figure

of 2,000 to 4,000 vehicles. (see Fig. 2)

Chariots had, as mentioned, some weaknesses as weapons of war. These included

the inability to traverse rough terrain, the need for extensive room to maneuver, and their

uselessness if the horses were injured or lost.[131] During the battle of the Medway in 43

CE for example, the Romans dispatched a raiding force to sneak across the river and kill

or cripple the chariot horses, thereby completely immobilizing that particular military

arm, and causing great consternation.[132] While chariots could be effective in close support

of cavalry, the fact was that cavalry on the whole was more effective. As mentioned, it

has been theorized that a conversion to a dedicated cavalry force from a mixed

chariot/cavalry force was underway by the time Caesar arrived on the island. By 84 CE,

the time of Agricola's campaigns in northern Britain and the vehicles' last recorded

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[129]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.33.
[130]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.19. Again, possible an exaggeration.
[131]   Sidnell, *Warhorse*, 15-16.
[132]   Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 7:60.20.3.

appearance, the chariot appears to have been reduced to a purely ceremonial and status role.[133]

Finally, a few words on Celtic fortifications. Celts appear to have maintained three types of general fortifications: actual fortified settlements, hill-forts, and larger fortified sites (*oppida*). Hill forts, very common in Britain, were generally permanent constructs taking advantage of a natural defensive position, but were generally unoccupied unless needed.[134] They were intended as a shelter for the local people and livestock against an approaching enemy. As they were intended for temporary occupation, many of the examples in Britain lacked a dedicated water-source, preventing long-term occupation by a large number of people. This worked well against a marauding raiding group which would not be staying in the vicinity for long, but was somewhat less than helpful against a well-supplied legion or prolonged siege. While common in Britain overall, they appear to have been somewhat uncommon in the region of Kent, and Caesar mentions only one site, Cassivallaunus' stronghold, which could have been a hill-fort, but might also have been a settlement.[135]

The *oppidum*, which was in the vicinity of modern Canterbury, is described as being within a wood bolstered by manmade fortifications such as dikes and wood barricades.[136] Such sites, which were not necessarily tied to obvious defensive sites such as hills, appear to have been intended as shelters and strongpoints where warriors could rally or regroup in relative safety, with larger examples sheltering fields and settlements

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[133]   Tacitus, *Agricola,* 35-36.
[134]   Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 138-9.
[135]   Frere, *Britannia*, 19.
[136]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.9

as well. The *oppidum* around Camulodunam which confronted the Romans in 43 CE was one of the largest examples, prosperous and formidable.[137]

In conclusion, then, Celtic society was highly individualistic and based around warfare. Their military was well suited for relatively small-scale raiding against similarly armed and equipped opponents, in which individual warriors could acquire personal wealth and glory. In large scale engagements, however, Celtic military tactics, equipment, and fortifications left much to be desired, especially against the Romans.

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[137]   Haywood, *The Celts*, 37. Technically oppidum is a Latin term for any native defended fortification but its use in the British context is defined above.
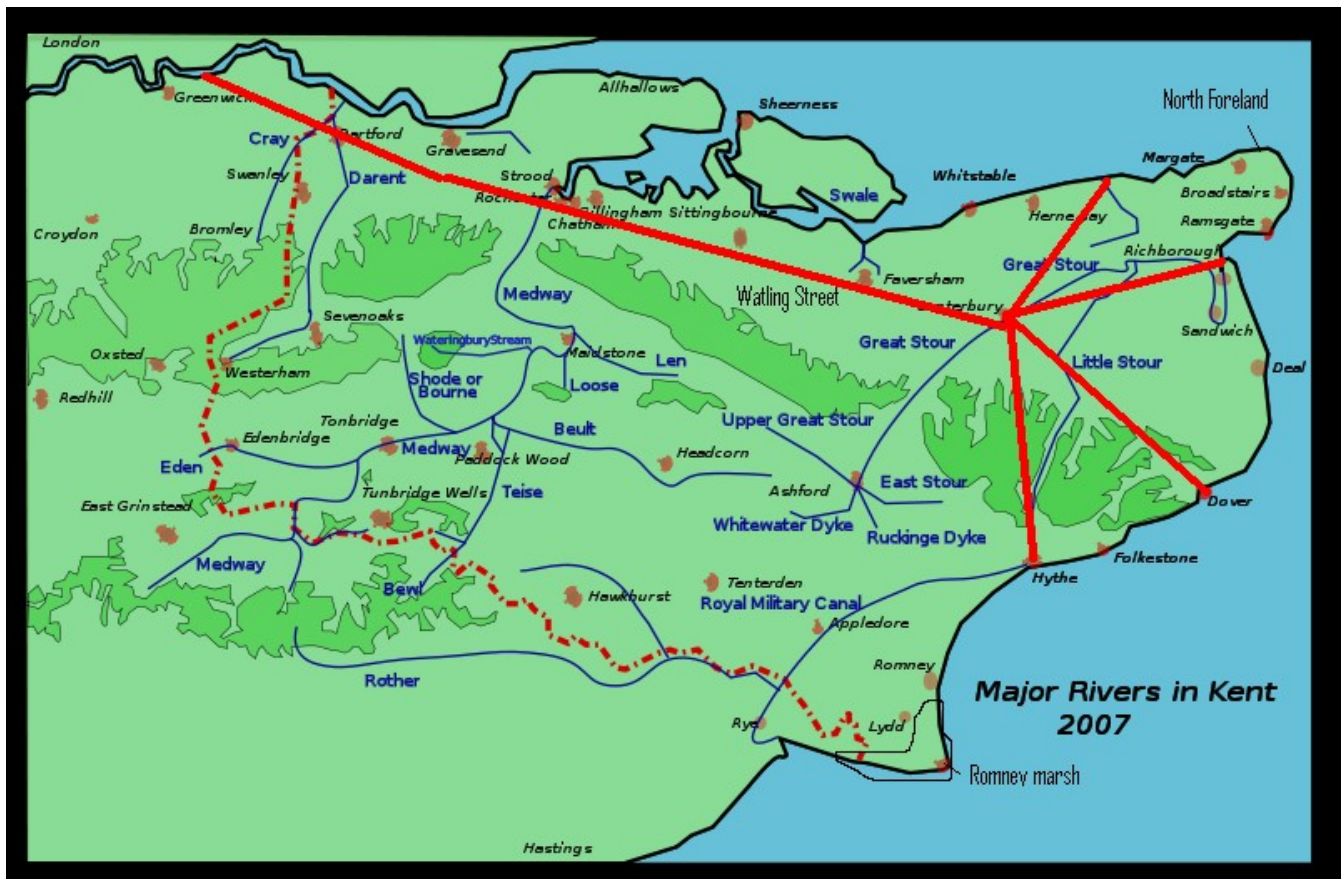
Figure 1: Clem Rutter, *Map of Kent: Rivers and Landforms*, created 2007 released as public domain, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Kent_Town_Rivers.svg. (Modified by author May, 2010).
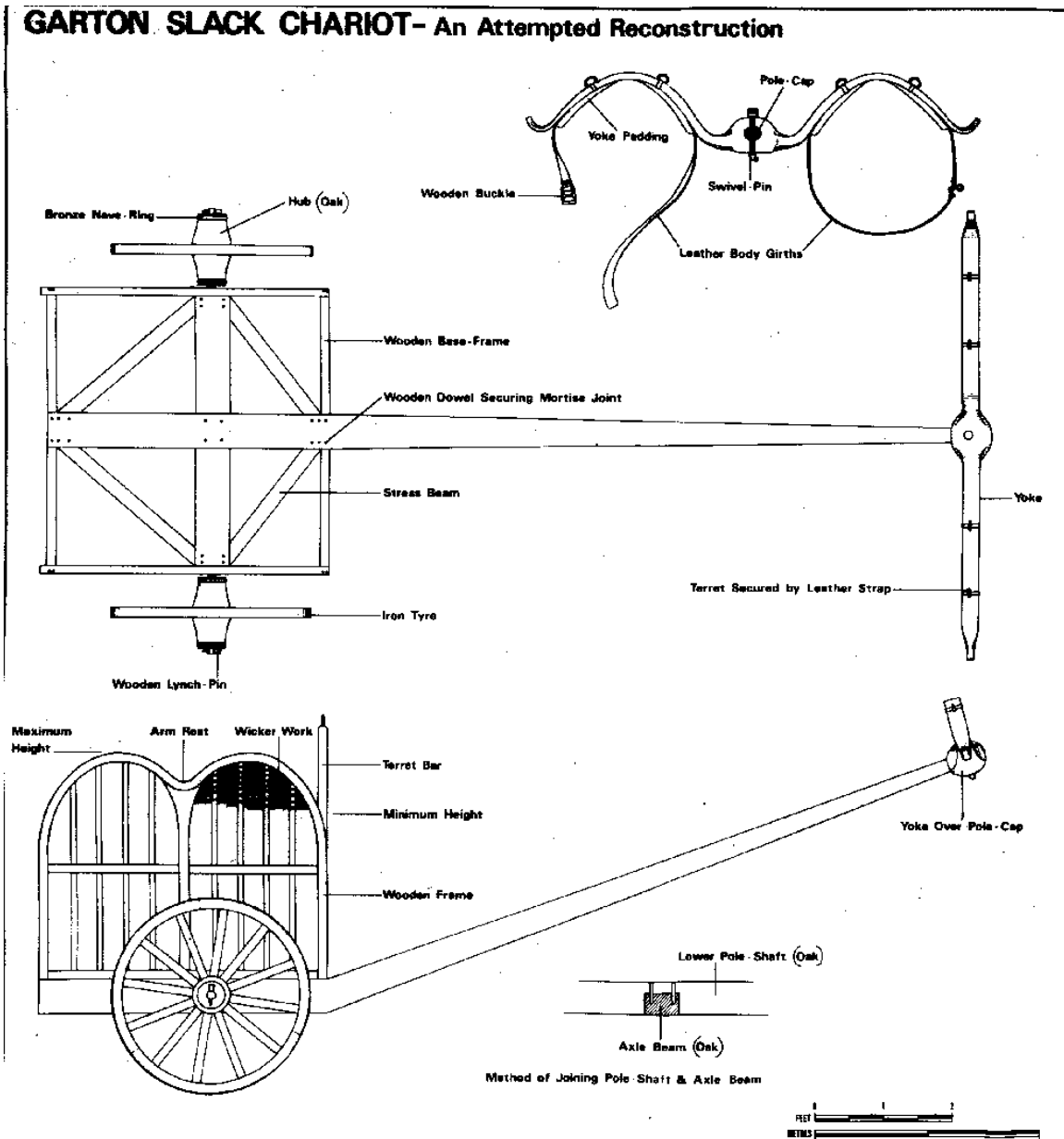
Figure 2: Author unknown, *Diagram of a Celtic war chariot based on remains found at Garton Slack*, http://www.gallica.co.uk/celts/garton/lay-out.gif, (Accessed May, 2010).

Chapter 3: Roman Activities in Gaul Prior to 55 BCE

Before discussing the invasions, Caesar's Gallic campaigns should be summarized in order to provide background information which will become relevant in any discussion of Caesar's motives for invading Britain. As well, the nature of the late-Republican Roman army will be briefly discussed in order to provide context and an understanding of why various battles unfolded as they did, as well as to facilitate a comparison of the Roman army to the Celtic military system described in chapter two.

The Gallic Wars which brought the Romans to the Channel coast were the result of a number of factors. The first was the nature of politics in Rome, which brought Caius Julius Caesar to the region. Politics in Rome were extremely competitive, with individual politicians attempting to outdo each other in terms of achievements and reputation in order to curry favour with the public.[138] The competition was fierce, and politicians preferred to allow serious problems to fester rather than allowing another politician to gain the credit for solving them, frequently leading to political deadlock. Recent years had, however, seen a rise in political violence ranging from the assassination of officials, such as the Gracchi brothers, who were promoting land reform at the expense of the wealthy, to a full-blown civil war between Sulla and Marius over the latter's attempt to replace the former in a potentially glorious and lucrative military command.[139]

This combination of rivalry and deadlock led to the creation of what is now known as the First Triumvirate. Both Marcus Licinius Crassus and Gnaeus Pompey had objectives they wished to fulfill that were continuously blocked by rivals in the Senate.[140]

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[138] Penrose, *Rome and her Enemies,* 94.

[139] Plutarch, *Lives*, *Tiberius Gracchus*: 10:8,19.5-6, *Gaius Gracchus*: 10:5,17.3, *Marius*: 9:34-35, *Sulla*: 4:27-32 .

[140] Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 189-91.

In 60 BCE, their frustrations with the Senate allowed Gaius Julius Caesar, who possessed a prior political and financial relationship with Crassus, to form a political alliance with the two men.[141] The triumvirate was not a formal body but simply an alliance of convenience which could be broken at any time. The combined wealth, power and prestige of the three men allowed Caesar to be elected consul for 59 BCE. During his consulship, Caesar passed the measures desired by Crassus and Pompey in return for a provincial command with which he could make his fortune and reputation.[142]

Politics were very expensive; in addition to the cost of public spectacles and actual election campaigns, outright bribery of the electorate was increasingly common.[143] Many ambitious young politicians amassed massive debts for themselves in their efforts to gain recognition. This expenditure was expected to be recouped by a provincial command which could be exploited. If a governor was fortunate, a war might be waged during his tenure, leading to both wealth and military glory. Non-citizen provincials had no real hope of legal action against a governor exploiting them for his own gain, as the governor's influence, clients, and bribery were usually sufficient to prevent him from being convicted.[144]

Caesar was no different in this respect; his political career had resulted in massive debts, and he had borrowed heavily from Crassus in particular.[145] He could not, however, simply cheat and extort money from the inhabitants of a province. He had gained legal

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[141] Plutarch, *Lives: Caesar*, 7:13.3-4.

[142] Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Julius Caesar*, 2 vols. Trans. J.C. Rolfe (London: W. Heinemann, 1964), 20.3.

[143] Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 27, 198. Plutarch, *Lives: Cato the Younger*, 8:21.2-4. For example, Cato threatened to prosecute whoever won the consulship in 62BCE on the grounds that all the candidates were guilty of bribery.

[144] Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World*, 121. A deputation of the Allobroges tribe unsuccessfully sought to charge a former governor with extortion.

[145] Plutarch, *Lives: Caesar*, 7:11.

recognition by prosecuting returning governors for corruption.[146] Therefore, a foreign war

was his only real option for gaining wealth and glory. Caesar at this time had a reputation

as a superb orator and a 'friend' of the people against the prominent men of the Senate.

He served in a variety of military roles throughout his career, as was usual for Roman

politicians, most notably as an apparently successful governor in Spain where he

conducted several campaigns against tribes in what is now Portugal, and qualified for a

triumph, but for practical purposes he lacked distinguished military achievements.[147] His

colleague Pompey was widely regarded as the foremost military leader in the Republic,

and both Caesar and Crassus desired to match him in achievements, a desire that would

lead to Crassus' death and contribute to full-scale civil war.[148]

Caesar secured, through the aid of Pompey and the popular assembly, the

province of Cisalpine Gaul (Northern Italy) and Illyricum (Western Balkans) with an

extraordinary command of five years, as opposed to the more standard single year. This

not only gave Caesar more time to secure both wealth and glory for himself, but also

secured him from prosecution, as consuls and proconsuls could not be charged by rivals

until their term was complete. When the governor of Transalpine Gaul (Southern France),

Metellus Celer, died unexpectedly, this province was added to Caesar's command as

well.[149] These provinces contained four legions (numbered the seventh to tenth), which

had been raised in Spain by either Pompey or Caesar, making them highly experienced

and efficient. He also had authority to raise new formations as needed. When Caesar took

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[146] Plutarch, *Lives: Caesar*, 7:4.1-3. Suetonius, *Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Julius Caesar*, 4.
[147] Plutarch, *Lives: Ceasar*, 7:12-13.1-2. Caesar gave up his right to triumph in order to stand for consul, banking that his future career would make up for the loss of the prestige.
[148] Most of the following account is drawn from the most detailed source available, Caesar's own writings: for a detailed discussion of these and potential problems see chapter 1.
[149] Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 213.

command in 58 BCE, then, he had an army and both the ambition and time to use it (see

Fig. 3 for provincial and tribal territories).

Caesar's initial plans, if any, are unknown. It is possible that he was

contemplating an eastern war in the Balkans, perhaps in Dacia. The fact that three of his

four legions were stationed in Cisalpine Gaul, and only one in Transalpine Gaul, might

support this theory.[150] Events in Gaul, however, presented him with both a significant

problem and a golden opportunity. The Helvetii tribal group, located in what is now

Switzerland, had long been planning to migrate into Gaul itself, aiming to settle near the

Atlantic seaboard.[151] Caesar claims the reason for the migration was that their present

territory was too confined to allow raiding and plundering expeditions, although it is

likely that population pressure and perhaps pressure from German tribes to the northeast

were also contributing factors.[152] Therefore, the whole population (Caesar claims 368,000

with 92,000 warriors, based on captured documents) set out.[153] The easiest route to the

coast passed through the territory of the Allobroges, a tribe that had been subdued and

was now under the control of the Roman Republic. This presented a significant danger to

Transalpine Gaul, as the Helvetii could be expected to ravage and plunder as they passed

through. Caesar, hurrying to the province, took the single legion stationed there and

blocked the Helvetii at the Rhone river. The Helvetii, after several crossing attempts were

defeated, gave up and moved off on another route.

Caesar hurried to Cisalpine Gaul, in order to retrieve the three legions stationed

there. He also enlisted two more, numbered the eleventh and twelfth, along with a

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[150] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.10.
[151] See Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.2-29. For Caesar's full account of the Helvetii campaign.
[152] John Haywood, *The Celts,* 62.
[153] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.29. These figures are most likely exaggerated (as was common with ancient authors) although how much is open to question. Theoretically Caesar could have produced those documents if someone had challenged his figures but could have also easily manufactured them.

number of auxiliaries and mercenaries, and led the army back into Gaul via the Alps.[154] In

the meantime, the Helvetii were busy pillaging the lands of the Aedui, a tribal grouping

considered to be allies by the Romans. A shortage of grain forced the Romans to divert

from the pursuit toward the town of Bibracte; the Helvetii, seeing this, pursued. Caesar

was finally able to bring the Helvetii to battle, and defeated them after a hard fight. Of the

total listed above, Caesar claims that only 110,000 Helvetii returned to their original

territory, although this could be an exaggeration on Caesar's part.[155]

Following this victory, a number of representatives from various tribes informed

Caesar of a second problem in northern Gaul that was rapidly spiraling out of control.[156]

During an inter-tribal conflict between the Aedui and Sequani, the latter had hired

German mercenaries of the Suebi tribe under Ariovistus who had betrayed their

employer, occupied territory, and taken hostages.[157] Recognizing the potential threat to

both allies and to Transalpine Gaul, Caesar sent emissaries to Ariovistus to induce him to

leave Sequani territory, but the latter refused. Learning that large numbers of Suebi were

reported to be preparing to cross the Rhine to join Ariovistus, Caesar secured grain

supplies and marched north. Ariovistus countered by moving south, creating alarm

among the legionaries.[158] Caesar salvaged the situation by appealing to the unit pride of

the army, stating that the tenth legion would be all he would need, and that he could trust

it to do its duty, prompting the remaining legions to vocally announce their willingness to

advance. Following several days of fruitless negotiations and maneuvering, the Romans

attacked and defeated the Germans.[159]

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[154] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.10.
[155] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.29.
[156] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.30.
[157] See Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.31-54. For Caesar's full account of the Ariovistus campaign.
[158] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.39-40.
[159] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.53.

Having scored two major victories in a single year and having established Roman preeminence throughout Celtic Gaul, Caesar sent his army into winter quarters and returned to Cisalpine Gaul to perform administrative and legal tasks. During the winter, he received reports from Labienus, his second-in-command, that the Belgic tribes were organizing against the Romans. [160] Caesar claims that the Belgic tribes feared that once Gaul was subdued, the Romans would turn on them. [161] Therefore, the Belgae had decided on a preemptive attack. These reports prompted Caesar to enroll two more legions, the thirteenth and fourteenth, and take them into central Gaul, launching a preemptive attack of his own. [162] It is uncertain how much of this account is true, and how much simply served as propaganda on Caesar's part to excuse his actions. A foreign enemy preparing to attack Roman allies would have been a much more acceptable reason for the Belgic campaign to his audience and critics in Rome than the desire to simply expand Rome's dominance and Caesar's wealth and prestige.

The Romans defeated several tribes piecemeal before entering the territory of the Nervii, who were able to gather an army and advance against the invaders. The Belgae launched a surprise attack while Caesar was constructing a camp on the river Sambre. After a hard fought battle, the Nervii broke and ran with severe losses; Caesar records that the fighting strength of the tribe was virtually destroyed. [163] Most of the remaining Belgic tribes either surrendered or were defeated in piecemeal fashion. Having completed a second successful campaign and, in his words, brought peace to Gaul, Caesar dispersed his army into winter quarters and returned to Cisalpine Gaul.

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[160]See Caesar, *The Gallic War*, Book 2. For Caesar's full account for the Belgic campaign.

[161] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 2.1.

[162] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 2.2.

[163] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 2.28. Again this is likely an exaggeration as they participated in numbers in subsequent revolts..

The campaign season of 56 BCE opened with a new war with the coastal Veneti tribes based in what is now Brittany.[164] As will be discussed in more detail in chapter four, these tribes had taken Roman ambassadors, who were attempting to collect tribute, hostage. The Veneti presented a unique challenge in that their main strength was in their fleet and, as their coastal settlements were difficult to access from land, the fleet could evacuate a settlement when it was on the point of falling.[165] The Romans were thus forced to construct a fleet of their own, and, despite being ill-suited to engage the heavier-built Gallic vessels, it was able to defeat the Veneti. The loss of so many ships and men prompted the whole tribe to surrender.[166] Caesar claims that, at this point, only the Morini and Manipii remained in arms. He therefore led an army into the lands of the former late in the campaigning season.[167] The legions widely ravaged and burnt the territory before withdrawing for the winter, causing severe damage, but they did not receive a formal submission.

The following year, 55 BCE, saw a migration of Germanic tribes, the Usipetes and Tencteri, across the Rhine at some point during the winter.[168] They crossed into the territory of the Menapi, occupied and ravaged it. The crossing was a threat to both the stability of Gaul, as a successful migration would only encourage more crossings, and, as will be seen, the proposed invasion of Britain. Therefore, the Romans, following fruitless negotiations, quickly advanced and defeated the invaders without great loss on their part.[169] Following this victory, Caesar resolved to cross the Rhine to discourage other German tribes from invading Gaul and to show that their own lands were not immune to

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[164] See Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 3.8-16. For Caesar's full account of the Veneti campaign.
[165] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 3.12.
[166] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 3.14-15.
[167] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 3.28.
[168] See Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.1-15. For Caesar's full account of the Usipetes campaign.
[169] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.14.

attack if the Romans so wished.[170] The Romans spent ten days constructing a bridge

instead of using boats, as a further demonstration of power. They then proceeded to

ravage the territory of the Sugambrii, who had given shelter to refugees of the Usipetes,

and of the Suebi, who had been menacing the Ubii, the only German tribe to have

become allies of the Romans. Caesar withdrew before a tribal army could be formed to

confront him and demolished the bridge, having, in Caesar's own opinion, made his

point.[171] This brief overview brings us to the late summer of 55 BCE and the first

invasion of Britain. Prior to discussing that, however, the Roman military needs to be

examined.

The primary tactical unit of a Roman army was the legion which was subdivided

into cohorts. A single legion tended to possess 10 cohorts numbered sequentially, with

the first cohort being considered the most senior. Each regular cohort had six centuries of

roughly 80 men, for a total of 480 men.[172] Under the empire at least, the first cohort

would have about double the strength of the others, about 800 men, although this

enlarged manpower allotment might have been implemented earlier.[173] Each legion thus

had about 5120 infantry but, including officers, and engineers, the total number could be

5400 or even 6000.[174] The centuries were divided into eight-man *contubernia* sharing a

tent, stove and cooking equipment under the supervision of a decurion. Each cohort had

six centuries, one for each century, promoted through a combination of merit and

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[170] See Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.16-19. For Caesar's full account of the 55 BCE Rhine crossing.
[171] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.19.
[172] Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War,* 13.
[173]   Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 14. Caesar, *The Civil Wars*, Trans. A. G. Peskett (London: W. Heinemann, 1966), 3.91. Caesar describes a group of 160 men led by the first centurion (leader of the first cohort) of the tenth legion possibly suggesting that the first cohort was twice as large. However, the phrasing could also be interpreted as the centurion leading volunteers in a makeshift formation due to losses or circumstances.
[174] Graham Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the first and second centuries A.D* (London: A & C Black ltd., 1985), 111.

patronage, with the senior having overall command.[175] In addition to a centurion, each century possessed an *optio* (second in command), *signifer* (standard bearer), and *tesserarius* (guard commander).[176] The senior centurion of the first cohort would be the senior centurion (*primus pilus* or first spear) of the legion and would habitually attend and advise senior officers' meetings.[177] The legion contained six tribunes, with one senior to the others, but at the time of the invasions, these did not have any specific duties. They were frequently young senators hoping to learn from the overall commander in the expectation that it would help their future political and military careers.[178] The legion as a whole was commanded by a legate who was appointed by the commanding general of the army.[179] Each legion also had an *aquilifer* who carried the legion's eagle standard, a number of *cornicines*, or horn blowers, for transmitting orders and a class of soldiers known as *immunes* who were specialists (artillerymen, musicians, engineers, etc.) that received higher pay and relief from work details, but were still line infantrymen.[180] The senior officers were drawn from the senatorial or equestrian classes and were often experienced men serving as a favour, or to gain distinction. Finally, the army as a whole was commanded by a consul or proconsul who had been appointed to the theatre of campaign by the senate. These were usually experienced officers who had spent several years as tribunes learning from a legate how to manage a battle.

A legion on its own possessed no light skirmishers and only limited cavalry. Legions in the early- and mid-Republic possessed a 300 strong contingent which was

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[175]   Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the first and second centuries A.D,* 110.
[176]   Pat Southern, *The Roman Army* (Oxford:ABC-CLIO, 2006), 93.
[177]   Henry Micheal Parker, *The Roman Legions* (Chicago: Ares, 1980), 31-32.
[178]   Parker, *The Roman Legions*, 188-189.
[179]   Parker, *The Roman Legions*, 51.
[180]   Webster, *The Roman Imperial Army of the first and second centuries A.D,* 117.

divided into ten 30-man *turmae,* each headed by a decurion.[181] By the period of the Gallic

wars, it appears that the Romans were almost totally reliant on local auxiliaries for their

cavalry as there are no references for citizen cavalry in this period.[182] While Caesar's

legions likely retained some Roman cavalry for scouting and dispatch services it is

unknown how these were organized or how numerous these were. Under the Empire,

each legion would possess about 120 dedicated cavalry, again organized into *turmae* and

used principally for scouting.[183] Combat cavalry were principally confined to auxiliary

units.

Cohort tactics, in their basic form, primarily differed from those of earlier military

organization in that they were more flexible, due to a somewhat simplified command

structure, along with fewer but larger and more capable units. There does not seem to

have been a set formation. The legion cohorts could be deployed in any number of lines

depending upon the number of troops, terrain, and nature of the enemy.[184] A commander

who was facing a numerous enemy might find that three lines would have created too

narrow a front, and so deploy his cohorts in a double line or single line. This would,

however, somewhat weaken a legion's capabilities, rendering it more vulnerable to

penetration and limiting available reserves. On average, the men of cohorts would stand

roughly ten men deep and 48 across, although this was frequently altered based on the

numbers and qualities of available troops.[185] In legions with multiple lines, the cohorts

deployed in a rough checkerboard pattern, although some scholars, citing Caesar as a

source among others, argue that this was for maneuvering only, and the cohorts would

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[181] Polybius, *The Histories*, 3:6.25.
[182] Sidnell, *Warhorse*, 208.
[183] Sidnell, *Warhorse*, 255.
[184] Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 137.
[185] Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 180.

form a continuous line just prior to engaging.[186] Again, the nature of the enemy or the terrain likely decided the exact nature of the formation. Typically, it appears that a three line formation would have four cohorts in the first line and three each in the second and third.[187] A good portion of a Roman army would thus be unengaged as the battle got underway and could be deployed into the battle as needed, or used to pursue a fleeing enemy. In addition, a legion could be deployed in any number of other formations depending on the circumstances. Cohorts could also operate in detachments away from the larger legions. Caesar frequently mentions granting subordinates command of odd groups of cohorts but often neglects to mention whether an entire legion had been assigned, or if he had selected cohorts from multiple units.[188] (see Fig. 4, for examples of possible formations)

In 55 BCE, at the time of his first invasion, Caesar possessed eight legions, numbered seventh to fourteenth, leading to a paper strength of roughly 40,000 infantry, although the actual number would be somewhat lower due to previous operational losses. Four of these legions, the seventh to tenth, had been inherited by Caesar when he had assumed command of the province of Cisalpine Gaul, while the remainder had been raised on his own authority and resources.[189] In addition Caesar possessed varying numbers of local Gallic auxiliaries. The numbers and activities of these auxiliaries in Caesar's army were not recorded with the same degree of precision as the legions, and

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[186] M. J. V. Bell, "Tactical Reform in the Roman Republican Army," *Historia: Zeitschrift für Alte Geschichte* 14, no 4 (Oct., 1965), 410.

[187] Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 138.

[188] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.9. Caesar gives Atrius command of twelve cohorts to guard his camp for example.

[189] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.7, 1.12, (Four legions in existence, Two raised against Helvetii), 2.2, (Two more legions enlisted against the Belgae).

likely varied radically over time, but they still composed an essential part of his army especially in regards to cavalry.

This employment of auxiliaries was a common practice among Roman commanders by this time. Previously, Roman light infantry and cavalry had largely come from various Italian allies. However, the granting of citizenship to all Italian allies in the early first century CE meant that all recruits went into the legions as heavy infantry, and the availability of cavalry was reduced.[190] What cavalry remained were too few for effective combat operations, and were employed instead as scouts and messengers. In addition, the legions lacked dedicated light infantry to screen them during deployment, on the march, or to provide support to cavalry operations. To make up for this lack of cavalry and light infantry, the Romans tended to hire, or obtain these from allies wherever they happened to be campaigning.[191] In his campaigns, Caesar naturally employed large numbers of Gallic cavalry and infantry to support his own forces, and these generally fought according to their own tactics. He also maintained a small Germanic bodyguard that functioned as a shock reserve.[192]

The core of a Roman army was the heavy infantry legionary. Every legionary was supposed to purchase his own equipment from the state; the amount was deducted from his pay.[193] This ensured a roughly uniform equipment standard throughout the army. Roman soldiers carried four foot high convex shields or *scuta*, with a rectangular oval shape. The shields were laminated planks covered in canvas, reinforced with iron edging and an iron boss. This boss could be rammed into an opponent, throwing him off balance

[190] Emilio Gabba, *Republican Rome: The Army and the Allies,* Trans. P.J Cuff (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 95.

[191] George Leonard Cheesman, *The Auxilia of the Roman Imperial Army* (Chicago: Aris Publishers, Inc., 1975), 9.

[192] Sidnell, *Warhorse*, 223, 231.

[193] Parker, *The Roman Legion*, 218.

and leaving him open to a sword strike.[194] In combat, the legionary would turn his left

side to face the enemy in order to protect himself behind his shield as much as possible.

This is also the reason for only one greave, as only one leg would be exposed towards the

enemy. The shields were, incidentally, very heavy, with reconstructions based on an

example found in Egypt (128x63.5 cm), and closely matching Polybius' description,

weighing in at 22 lbs.[195] In addition to their weapons and armour, the troops would also

have to carry personal effects and supplies on the march.

The legionaries were armed with two *pila* or throwing spears, a short stabbing

sword or *gladius*, and a dagger (*pugio*). The *pila* were about 1.2 meters long with an iron

spear point of about 76 centimeters long. The weight of a thrown *pilum* would all be

concentrated at the point, allowing it to penetrate enemy shields. Even if the *pilum* missed

the man behind the shield, it would be extremely difficult to dislodge in the middle of

battle, rendering the shield very unwieldy.[196] According to Polybius, the two *pila* were of

different weights: this is verified by the archaeological record wherein a number of

varying sizes of *pilum* heads have been found.[197] In an emergency, *pila* could also be used

as anti-cavalry spears, as Caesar's troops used them at the battle of Pharsalus, although

they were not ideal for this role due to their short length.[198] The *pugio* was a short

stabbing dagger likely used to finish off wounded enemies, as a weapon of last resort, or

simply for decorative purposes.[199]

The *gladius* was the primary weapon of all Roman troops up to the third century

CE. While *gladius* is a general word for sword, it came to refer specifically by Caesar's

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[194]   Polybius, *The Histories*, 3:6.23.2-5.
[195]   Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 209-210.
[196]   Polybius, *The Histories*, 3:6.23.9-11.
[197]   Southern, *The Roman Army*, 209.
[198]   Caesar, The Civil Wars, 3.93.
[199]   Southern, *The Roman Army*, 213.

day to a series of short swords measuring 64-80 centimeters long (including the hilt), depending upon the specific type.[200] These blades were manufactured of high quality steel with wood or bone hilts. The blade had a two-edged cutting surface as well as a tapered point for thrusting. This type of blade is commonly referred to as a Spanish sword (*Gladius Hispaniensis)* due to its place of origin, although, as mentioned, a number of versions existed.[201] The date of the *gladius'* exact introduction is unknown but it was in service by the third century BCE. It was possibly encountered during the First Punic War in the hands of Spanish mercenaries in Carthaginian service and was copied from captured examples.[202] Another theory is that Scipio Africanus, following the conquest of New Carthage (209 BCE) in Spain during the Second Punic war, captured a number of Spanish metalsmiths who could not only manufacture high quality swords but taught the Romans how to do so, allowing for their widespread adoption.[203] In any event, the *gladius* was widely used because it was perfectly suited to Roman infantry tactics, especially in terms of ease of use in close confines with the heavy shield. Generally, a legionary would strike his opponent with his shield boss and stab him while he was off balance, although he would slice at any body part that presented itself.

For armour, legionaries wore a chain mail shirt (*lorica hamata*).[204] This armour was more expensive and difficult to produce than a simple plate cuirass, and consisted of looped iron rings held together by riveted iron rings running vertically.[205] As mentioned, this armour was strong, flexible, and relatively light-weight, and provided good protection from stabbing or slashing weapons, although less so in regards to blunt

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[200]   Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 217.
[201]   Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 217.
[202]   Southern, *The Roman Army*, 212.
[203]   Southern, *The Roman Army*, 212.
[204]   Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 216.
[205]   Southern, *The Roman Army*, 156

weapons. It is possible that the Romans learned how to manufacture this type of armour from the Celts, but it is known to have been in use during the Second Punic War and the conquest of Spain.[206] The *lorica hamata* would remain in use up to the end of the Roman Empire, and the technology behind it, in one form or another, to the present day. A second type of armour, known to us as the *lorica squamata,* was also in use, and consisted of iron scales sewn onto a fabric backing. This type of armour was cheaper and heavier than the chain mail, but still offered good protection. Its use seemed to have been dictated by cost and personal preference. It also polished well and probably presented a fine appearance on parade.[207] The Roman helmets were generally the brass Montefortino type, conical with a neck guard, leaving the ear and face exposed so the soldier could see and hear orders.[208] The helmets also included a crest for intimidation purposes: legionaries would wear theirs longitudinally and centurions transversally for distinction on parade and in combat.[209] Aside from armour, legionaries wore a cloth tunic, a leather apron, and a type of sandal known as *caliga*, designed for hard marching, after which the emperor Caligula was nicknamed.[210]

By 55 BCE, a numbering scheme for the legions had begun to take shape, although it was based as much on the commander who organized and commanded the legions as on the sequence of creation.[211] Caesar's army during the Gallic wars, for example, ultimately consisted of the fifth to fifteenth legions plus the first, temporarily on loan from Pompey. As mentioned, only the seventh to tenth had been pre-existing units, raised and numbered by Pompey or Caesar in Spain. The others were all raised by Caesar

[206]   Sidnell, *Warhorse*, 162.
[207]   Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 216.
[208]   Goldsworthy, *The Roman Army at War*, 213.
[209]   Penrose, *Rome and her Enemies*, 108.
[210]   Southern, *The Roman Army*, 155. Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Caligula*, 8.
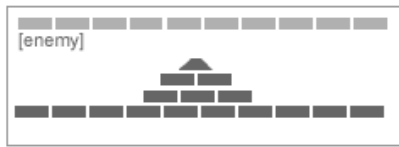[211]   Parker, *The Roman Legions*, 51.

from local Gauls or Roman colonists, although not all at once. The number scheme was not formalized until the ascension of Augustus, and at times multiple legions bearing the same number were in existence, especially during times of civil strife.

This, then, was the type of army employed by the Romans in the late Republic and which Caesar led to Britain in 55 BCE. It was a highly experienced and formidable heavy infantry force which in a direct confrontation was extremely difficult to defeat, especially under a skilled commander. However, there were severe vulnerabilities in terms of supplies and support troops, especially cavalry. The Romans were dependent on local sources for both, and therefore vulnerable to potential revolts on the part of the Gallic tribes. Both these military capabilities and weaknesses would come into play during the invasion which shall now be examined.

Figure 3: N/A, *Map of Gallic Tribal Territories and Place Names*, released as common property, Jan, 2005, http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Map_Gallia_Tribes_Towns.png, (Modified by author, May, 2010).
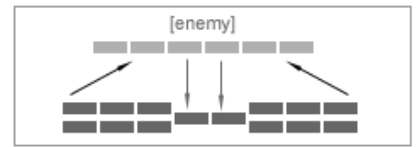
Figure 4:. Daniel Adams, *Legion Formations*, released as public domain, 2006, http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/en/e/e6/Mpl-frm-variations.png, (Accessed May, 2010.)

Chapter 4: The Invasion of 55 BCE

In late August, 55 BCE, Caesar launched his first invasion of Britain, possibly intended only as a reconnaissance in force. This campaign is described in Book Four of his commentaries on the Gallic war. The only relatively detailed source of information for this and the subsequent operation is Caesar's own writings, so his account will figure heavily in the ensuing discussion. This chapter will attempt to interpret Caesar's motivations for the invasion, describe the actual events, and attempt to interpret the decisions made during the invasion by both the Romans and Britons. Finally, the operation as a whole will be evaluated in light of Caesar's stated purpose, along with its influence upon the following year's operation.

It is not quite certain exactly when Caesar resolved to launch an expedition to Britain. The first mention of his plans in his commentaries is that he resolved to go to Britain in late summer, 55 BCE, following the German campaigns described previously.[212] The avowed pretext was that the Britons had participated in various Gallic uprisings against Roman dominance, and therefore Gaul would not be secured so long as Britain continued to be independent to encourage resistance and harbor fugitives. This decision, at first glance, seems impulsive, especially given the lateness of the season and the short time with which to prepare. However, Caesar must have been considering this operation for a much longer period of time, if only in the back of his mind, for precisely the reasons mentioned above. If he is accurate about the British aid, then the possibility of an expedition to Britain might have occurred to him as early as 57 BCE during the conflict with the Belgae.[213] It would have been around that time that the Romans would

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212   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.20.

[213] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.12. It possible that, as the British Belgic tribes kept, as Caesar, states, the names of the continental tribes from which they originated, prisoners were able to tell Caesar about

have been in a position to consider invading Britain with practical interest, having just reached and seized control of a portion of the channel coast. In addition, at this point it would be possible to receive and gather verifiable concrete information regarding the island that would have been of key importance in planning the undertaking.

There is evidence in Caesar's commentaries that he had been possibly planning this for a longer period of time. The conflict with the Veneti (56 BCE) can be easily seen as a prelude to a channel expedition. While the nominal Roman motive for attacking them (the seizure of envoys) is perfectly reasonable, as is the motive of the Veneti for rebelling (to recover hostages) there are alternative interpretations.[214] Strabo, for example, in his geography, when describing the tribes of Gaul, credits the Veneti insurgents with the motive of protecting their coastal and ocean trade monopoly from Caesar.[215] If true, this would suggest that he had been actively planning for an expedition at that time. In line with this, the Roman campaign could be viewed as a preparatory endeavor, with the envoys and hostages simply serving as a justifiable pretext. The defeat of the Veneti and other coastal tribes brought several advantages to the Romans, beyond simply establishing their supremacy in a new region. The apparently extensive Veneti ocean trade had provided them with a ready-made navy, and the defeat of this fleet removed any potential naval impediment for the Romans.[216] While the Britons most obviously possessed ships of their own, as Caesar received British envoys that had to travel to the continent somehow, they apparently were not significant enough to warrant any mention

their kinsmen across the channel.
[214] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 3.8.
[215] Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, 2:4.4.1.
[216] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 305.

from Caesar.[217] In addition, Veneti ships had been captured at the battle of Moriban and these would have been invaluable for troop transports.[218]

Similarly, the punitive campaigns against the Morini, supposedly launched because they failed to send ambassadors, could also be interpreted as a preparatory operation; their territory, around the modern ports of Boulogne and Calais, was the closest to Britain and therefore would allow the easiest passage across the channel.[219] This campaign could thus be interpreted as an effort to secure an embarkation point and supply line by instilling fear in the locals so they would not interfere with the preparations or rise up while Caesar was away. That they were not totally subdued before the invasion effort will be seen. Finally, the German operations, in the summer of 55 BCE, would have been necessary to keep the Germans from destabilizing the region while Caesar was away (or while he was present for that matter).[220] Caesar does not record what exactly his plans for that year had been before the Germans had crossed the Rhine; it is possible that a British expedition was his primary goal but the Germans forced him to delay his plans.

On the other hand, Caesar's stated reasons for these campaigns were perfectly legitimate from the Roman political perspective. Defending allies from aggressors was a time-honored tradition among the Romans, even if that defense served Rome's own interests.[221] In this case, the ostensible reason, to keep the Germans out of Gaul and keep

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[217] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.21.
[218] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 3.14-15. The Veneti ships likely suffered little structural damage during the battle as the Romans found ramming to be ineffective and resorted to crippling the enemy rigging. This type of damage would have been easily repaired if Caesar intended for them to be preserved over the winter for use the following year.
[219] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.21.
[220] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.5.
[221] Southern, *The Roman Army*, 41. There are numerous examples available in ancient sources. See Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 1.31 or Polybius, *The Histories*, 1:3.15.

them from disrupting the new power structure Caesar was constructing, served to demonstrate Roman power to both the Germans and Gauls. Finally, Caesar specifically claims that this campaign was waged in order to avoid a more serious campaign.[222] The most obvious explanation for this statement is that he feared the Gauls would act rashly and either revolt or attempt to expel the Germans on their own, leading to chaos and disorder in the north. It could also be interpreted, however, that he had other plans and did not want to lose the entire summer reordering the North.

If Caesar was considering or planning for an expedition possibly as early as 57 BCE, what were his motives? As already mentioned, he states that the tribes on the island had sent detachments over to participate in the various insurrections on the continent.[223] In addition, the island was providing shelter for refugees, including members of the Belgae and Veneti, who were in turn reputedly urging the local tribes to send help to their brethren across the channel. At first glance, these reasons are logical enough. So long as the island provided a haven to those refugees, the newly-cowed tribes on the continent could be moved to revolt again, especially with the prospect of being bolstered by British warriors. Also, a free Celtic community in relatively close proximity to a newly conquered one would serve as a bad example, or as an external threat to stability in the same manner as the Germans.[224] Yet, while it is possible and even likely that Britons had participated in the Belgic revolts, it is highly unlikely that these warriors were very numerous.[225] Given the generally disorganized nature and internal conflicts of the Britons, it was unlikely any sizable contingent of warriors could be sent at all.

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[222] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.6.
[223] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 2.14 (Belgic leaders flee into Britain), 3.9 (Veneti summon auxiliaries from Britain).
[224] Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World*, 213, 215.
[225] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 36.

In addition, the threat of intervention on the island and news of preparations had led to a number of chiefs sending ambassadors to Caesar, pledging their submission, undoubtedly in the hope that this would keep the Romans away. In response, Caesar dispatched Commius, the trusted chieftain of the Artrebates tribe, to negotiate hostages and submission of other tribes.[226] It appears possible, then, that Caesar could have used the threat of invasion to achieve his goals of keeping the Britons from interfering in Gaul without the risk inherent in an actual invasion, especially an operation so late in the year and near the time of the autumn channel storms. At the very least, it might have been possible to wait until Gaul had become more acclimated to Roman rule and thereby provide a more secure base. Therefore, we have to consider what other motives Caesar could have had.

There are two possible motives for the invasion beyond the threat to Roman domination of Gaul, both directly benefiting Caesar himself if the invasion was successful. The first and most obvious was that Britain was reputed by some to be rich.[227] This meant a large amount of war booty and tribute for Rome, the army and, most importantly, Caesar himself. A number of ancient authors credit greed as being Caesar's primary motivation. Suetonius, for example, claims that Caesar invaded because he had heard that there were pearls on the island.[228] Britain's position at the end of an historic trade route and its reputation for producing tin and other mineral resources would certainly suggest that the island was wealthy. However, an examination of Celtic burial sites shows that grave goods, while certainly elaborate, were not overly valuable, and much was imported from Gaul, including Mediterranean goods.[229] Opinion of Britain

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[226] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.21.
[227] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 35.
[228] Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*: *Julius Caesar*, 47.
[229] Frere, *Britannia*, 23.

among ancient authors was mixed at the time, and even after the later invasion of 43 CE,

some considered it potentially valuable, while others considered it to be worthless.

Cicero, for example, in a letter to his friend Trebatius serving on Caesar's staff, chides

him about the lack of gold and silver (there were only slaves), citing his brother's letters,

and jokingly advises him to capture a chariot and ride home.[230] Strabo, on the other hand,

considered Britain to be rich in terms of trade, but not worth the expense of occupying.[231]

Given the sketchy information the Romans possessed and the likely prevalence of rumors

at the time of the first invasion, however, the Romans could have reasonably expected

rich takings from the island and at the very least large numbers of slaves.

A potential second motive was less material but potentially just as valuable to

Caesar: the fact that no Roman army had ever been to Britain before.[232] Roman politics

were, as mentioned, extremely competitive and every politician, young or old, strove to

make a name for himself either through his own accomplishments or those of his

ancestors. These achievements could range from distinguished judicial action to political

reform to, most importantly, military action. Jealousy and personal enmity went hand-in-

hand in this desire for fame, and rivals would attempt to disparage an achievement or

block recognition of a rival. Caesar's extraordinary command in Gaul provided him with

opportunities for fame not available to most Romans. One means of gaining fame was

through doing things never before accomplished by a Roman leader and defeating

peoples who had never been confronted by a Roman army. Caesar's German operations

of 55 BCE are good examples of this renown-based propaganda. Although Germanic

tribes had been previously fought and defeated, no Roman army had ever crossed the

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[230]   Cicero, *Letters to his Friends*, 2:7.7.1.
[231]   Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, 2:4.5.3. Raw materials exported include grain, gold, silver, iron, and hides.
          [232] Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 326.

Rhine. His detailed description of the construction of the bridge reflects both the pride he felt at the achievement as well as the renown he expected to generate in Rome due to it.[233] Crossing to Britain, a relatively unknown land with unknown people, would be an even greater achievement.[234] A letter which Cicero wrote to his brother, who was serving with Caesar as a legate during the second invasion, eagerly asking for a description of the land, reflects the excitement this expedition could have generated back in Rome.[235] It is highly probable that all these reasons combined led to the decision to launch the invasion, with Caesar's usual impetuosity prompting him to launch so late in the campaigning season.[236]

Whatever his motives, Caesar was resolved to launch an expedition in 55 BCE, and began attempting to gather information about Britain, its coast, harbours, people, tribes and their military tactics. This likely occurred in early- to mid-August as his fleet was fitting out. He initially consulted coastal merchants who traded with the Britons, but they were unable or unwilling to provide information.[237] While it is possible that they did not know about conditions inland, it is far less credible that they could not provide information regarding ports and coastal terrain features. A number of scholars have theorized that these merchants, fearing for their trade monopoly, deliberately held back from providing information, hoping that the Romans would not try to interpose themselves in the British trade.[238] To make up for the lack of intelligence regarding the island, Caesar dispatched a tribune named Gaius Volusenus in a warship to survey the

[233] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.17.
[234] Frere, *Britannia*, 28.
[235] Cicero, *Letters to his Friends* (*Letters to his Brother Quintus*), 3:2.16.4.
[236] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 36. Caesar could move extremely quickly, to an almost reckless extent. This frequently took his opponents by surprise.
[237] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.20.
[238] Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 337.

coast of what is now Kent.[239] Caesar records the survey taking five days, and Volusenus

is believed to have travelled along the coast of Kent from the Romney Marsh to North

Foreland, although it is unknown exactly how far west he was able to travel.[240] The

information from this survey, although useful, would not have provided much beyond

coastal features, as Volusenus was not willing to land for fear of capture, an indication

that the Romans indeed considered the island hostile territory, and that they either knew

or suspected that the islanders were making preparations to resist them.[241] It was around

this time, as well, that the British ambassadors came to Caesar but what information, if

any, he received from them is unknown. He failed to gain anything from his envoy

Commius, as the Britons had imprisoned him upon his arrival.[242]

Caesar records his fleet as gathering in an unnamed location 'convenient' for

travel to Britain in the territory of the Morini.[243] There has been great debate on the

identity of this port, with the most popular options being modern Wissant and Boulogne,

with the latter being the most commonly accepted port due to its size and the shelter

provided by the surrounding cliffs.[244] The debate by scholars over which port was used,

along with the identity of Portus Itius, the port used during the invasion of 54 BCE, will

be discussed in more detail in the next chapter. The fleet consisted of 80 transports of

unknown type which Caesar commanded to be assembled from the neighboring

districts.[245] Given the rush to sail before the campaign season ended, these transports were

most likely full sail vessels in the style of the Veneti ships and possibly included ships

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[239] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.21.
[240] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar* , 309.
[241] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.21.
[242] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.27.
[243] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.21.
[244] Frere, *Britannia*, 31.
[245] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.21-22, 3.13 (Veneti ship description).

captured the previous year. If this is so, then it is also likely that these vessels had their own native crews, as there was insufficient time to train legionaries, (the only pool of Roman manpower available), how to sail. As well, there were an additional eighteen transports in another port eight Roman miles to the north (one Roman mile roughly equals 0.92 modern miles). These had been kept from the rendezvous by contrary winds, lending credence to the theory of lack of oars, and were therefore assigned to the cavalry, presumably because the latter would be able to reach the transports faster in the event of a sudden sailing.[246] In any event, in addition to the transports, Caesar possessed a number of warships and smaller scout and messenger vessels, left over from the Veneti campaign.[247] As there was expected to be no naval opposition, these were unlikely to have been very numerous, possibly around twenty large warships, either biremes or triremes. Taken together, the fleet may have numbered roughly 120 vessels total.

Caesar considered 80 transports sufficient to transport the two legions which made up the core of his expedition.[248] These legions are explicitly referred to at various times as being the seventh and tenth. Both were highly experienced units, having existed before Caesar's Gallic command, and having served throughout his campaigns: they could be relied upon to comport themselves well. The tenth was especially favored by Caesar and was frequently placed in the position of what was considered the most honour, at the right end of the battle line.[249] Due to their length of service, both likely having been founded in the 60s BCE, and their extensive campaigning, both units would have been under-strength. Therefore, they likely totaled between 4000 or 4500 heavy

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[246] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.22. See chapter 5 for discussion on the 55 BCE port.
[247] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 21.
[248] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.22, 4.25 (The *aquilifer* of the tenth inspires his comrades during landing), 4.32 (The seventh is sent to collect grain).
[249] Caesar, *The Civil Wars*, 3.89. Caesar describes placing the tenth legion on his right as "observing his previous custom…"

infantry each. It is unknown how many cavalrymen and their mounts could have been accommodated in eighteen transports, but it cannot have been more than 500 according to Frere and Holmes, and perhaps fewer.[250] In any event, the numbers are irrelevant because, as we will see, the cavalry did not join Caesar. Finally, Caesar likely brought some form of skirmishers or slingers, possibly manning the warships, although he does not specifically mention them. A lack of light infantry might have accounted for some of the difficulty the Romans found in suppressing the British chariots. The Roman expedition thus totaled roughly 10,000 men, not counting any Gallic crew who would have stayed on board their ships.[251] The remainder of the Roman army, six legions and an indeterminate number of cavalry and auxiliaries, was left under the command of two of Caesar's legates, Quintus Sabinus and Lucius Cotta, to keep the port secure, and keep an eye on the Morini and other potentially troublesome tribes.[252]

At this point, the precise goal of the first expedition should be examined. As we have seen, the size of the invasion force was not large, considering the wider forces available to the Romans. While it can be argued that the lack of transports was the limiting factor, Caesar could have delayed a year to allow more vessels to be constructed to ferry more troops. In addition, the legions were embarked without most of their baggage, which meant they left most of their supplies and equipment in Gaul, Caesar stating outright that they had intended to winter there.[253] Caesar clearly expected to live off the land in Britain, which would have led to trouble during the winter, especially as winter storms, which he must have been aware of by then, would have made shipping additional supplies hazardous at best. Given all these factors, it is more likely that the 55

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[250] Frere, *Britannia*, 30. Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 313.
[251] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 313.
[252] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.22.
[253] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.29.

BCE expedition was intended as a reconnaissance mission to gather information about the island and its inhabitants: their possible tactics, information about inland terrain and tribes, resources and other such information.[254] As previously mentioned, the Romans had little definite information about Britain, and what had been gathered related mainly to the coast. For safety, a full-scale campaign would require more information about what the invaders might face, and Caesar's previous attempts to gather this information had apparently proven largely unsuccessful up to that point in time. A side benefit, as described by Frere, was that Caesar could use the raid to judge attitudes in Rome; if his enemies proved implacable then the 55 BCE crossing could be described as a punitive expedition and the real invasion plan could be quietly shelved.[255] For a raid, two legions were large enough to defend themselves, at least in the short term, while not being too large to gather grain and other supplies off the land which, in late summer, would be ripe in the fields.[256]

The fleet sailed at the 'third watch', sometime around midnight, taking advantage of good weather, and proper wind and tide conditions for sailing to Britain.[257] As it was sailing, the cavalry was sent to their transports to board and join the fleet off Britain. Caesar claims they took too long travelling and loading: presumably they missed the wind or tides and remained trapped in port. The Roman fleet reached Britain at the fourth hour (8:30-9:30 am roughly), likely at or near Dover. This natural harbour would have been noted by Volusenus but, as an officer apparently highly thought of by Caesar, it was doubtful he would have recommended a landing point that was commanded by cliffs and

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[254] Frere, *Britannia*, 30.
[255] Frere, *Britannia*, 29.
[256] Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 336.
[257] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.23. See Fig. 6 for Roman movements in 55BCE.

hills.[258] Even if he had, Caesar would hardly have considered landing at such a site, especially if it were contested by an enemy, as was the case. Caesar states that he waited at anchor for the fleet to rally until the ninth hour (2:30-3:30 pm), presumably waiting for the missing cavalry transports, straggling infantry transports and for tidal conditions to shift. At the same time, during a meeting of his officers, he informed them of his intention to seek a new landing site based upon Volusenus' information, and that speed was essential to take advantage of favourable conditions.

Caesar does not record whether he travelled north or south from Dover, only that he had a favorable wind and tide to travel seven Roman miles to the new landing zone where the shore was open and gently sloping.[259] This distance would be roughly equivalent to the distance to Deal and Hythe to the north and south respectively. Historians have generally favoured the northern point based on topographical accounts (general terrain, tidal movements, as well as various campaign movements in the following year) and latter Roman construction and activities in the area.[260] In addition, Holmes claims, quite reasonably, that Caesar would not have started south-west on a tide which was starting to ebb and on the verge of shifting northeast.[261] The Romans had been in the region long enough to have witnessed such tidal movements. Finally, it should be kept in mind that Caesar had no real way to accurately tell time. A water clock, which he records using (on land) in 54 BCE, would have been rendered useless by sea movement, and any other method would have resulted in a rough estimate at best.[262]

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[258] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 3.5. Volusenus is described as a man of "great sagacity and courage" and is one of the few tribunes Caesar praised in this manner.

[259] Ceasar, *The Gallic War*, 4.23.

[260] Webster, *The Roman invasion of Britain*, 95-6. North-eastern Kent is the primary site favoured by historians for Claudius' invasion in 43 CE, due to a large construction at Richborough that has been dated to that period.

[261] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 649.

[262] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.13.

The exact date of the landing has long been believed by historians to have been August 26th or 27th. Caesar mentions, four days after landing, that the moon was full, and the first full moon before the autumnal equinox (September 25th Julian calendar) was either the 30th or 31st.[263] The main problem with this dating is that oceanographers have long stated that sailing north at that time was impossible due to tidal conditions; at the ninth hour, on that date, the tide would be flowing southwest.[264] This problem is explained by some scholars, including Holmes, by interpreting Caesar's account to mean that he waited until the ninth hour for stragglers to catch up while holding his conference.[265] Then, when the fleet had assembled, some organization would have had to have been imposed and the various ship captains would have had to have been given orders as well, although Caesar does not mention this. This would have taken some time to accomplish. In addition, the passage can easily be interpreted to read that Caesar waited for the tide to start to turn, allowing the Romans to proceed northward, not that the tide turned in the ninth hour immediately after the meeting.[266] The main weakness in this scenario, however, is that it would result in the landing and battle occurring very late in the day, perhaps even after nightfall.

A recent study by a team headed by Donald Olson of Texas State University has presented an alternative theory, advocating that the landing occurred on the 22nd or 23rd.[267] Based on experiments conducted in 2007 under identical tidal conditions to 55 BCE (which will not reoccur until 2140) they found that, on August 27th as mentioned, the tide

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[263] Donald Olson, "Caesar's Invasion of Britain," *Sky and Telescope* 116, no. 2 (Aug. 2008), 20.
[264] Olson, "Caesar's Invasion of Britain," 20-22. Comparison tidal charts can be seen on pg. 22.
[265] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 315, 648.
[266] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.23. The passage reads "…He then dismissed them; and catching at one moment a favourable wind and tide, he gave the signal…" The passage does not explicitly state that the tide turned immediately after the meeting and is open to interpretation.
[267] Olson, "Caesar's Invasion of Britain," 23.

was flowing southwest around the ninth hour and did not begin turning northeast until five to six in the evening. On the surface, this would support a southern landing point. However, all the terrain information available, including general terrain descriptions and mention by Cassius Dio of the Romans rounding a headland (the South Foreland) fits conditions that are to be found to the north around Deal, better than the south.[268] Complicating matters is an obscure reference by Valerius Maximus (writing in the first century CE) to the invasion which describes the tide falling during landing when, on the 26-27th, it was rising everywhere on the coast, north or south.[269]

The solution Olson arrives at is, as mentioned, to place the landing on the 22nd or 23rd. The tidal flow would have been running north-east at the ninth hour, allowing for the course of events favoured by historians (a landing at Deal) with the tide falling during the landing, as related by Maximus.[270] The main problem lies in the statement that the landing occurred four days before the full moon. The solution arrived at by Olson, that there is a transcription error in the text and it should say a week (VII instead of IV), is not totally convincing or provable, however.[271] Olson is also trusting that Maximus' account, which was written well after the fact, is accurate rather than dramatic. This theory also calls into question what exactly Caesar did for a week while waiting for the cavalry transports. Based on its direct tidal experiments as well as the timing in terms of daylight, however, this author is inclined to support the results of the Texas study, despite its weaknesses.

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[268] Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 3:39.51.1
[269] Olson, "Caesar's Invasion of Britain," 23. Valerius Maximus, *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*, trans. Henry Walker (Indianapolis: HackettPublishing Company, Inc., 2004), 3.2.23.
[270] Olson, "Caesar's Invasion of Britain," 22.
[271] Olson, "Caesar's Invasion of Britain," 23.

Whatever the date, the fleet likely arrived at the new landing zone around 4:30 or 5 (or even 6 to 7 pm if the invasion occurred on the 26th), given both travel and rally time, and the choice was to either land immediately or anchor and wait until morning. While waiting had a number of advantages, such as giving the troops an entire day to operate, and possibly giving the cavalry transports time to catch up, Caesar appears to have chosen to land immediately.[272] His precise reasoning behind this decision is unknown, but some possible explanations include: keeping the Britons from making defensive preparations (their infantry were, as will be seen, trailing behind); the vulnerability of the fleet to the vagaries of the weather; and Caesar's natural impatience. The landing, therefore, was under severe time constraints (especially on the 26th), as the legionaries would have to disperse the Britons and construct a camp before nightfall and there would have been no way to predict how long the fighting might take. As well, the landing would be without cavalry support which would severely limit reconnaissance and the ability of the legionaries to pursue the beaten enemy.

The local British tribes had gathered their forces to oppose the Roman landing. On the eve of the invasions, south-eastern Britain was divided into a number of tribal territories. It should be noted that the boundaries between tribal groups are only rough estimates, as the territories were not strictly defined and were fairly elastic. The tribes occupying these regions, especially those in modern Kent and the region immediately north of the Thames, are believed to have been relatively recent immigrants, and thus closely linked with the Belgae across the channel, although some of the more inland tribes are still believed to have been Brythonic, ruled by a Belgic aristocracy.[273] The

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[272] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.24.
[273] Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World*, 214.

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inhabitants of Kent are collectively called Cantiaci (and ultimately give their name to the region) by Caesar and others.[274] These are described as the most civilized of the British Celtic tribes, being the closest to the continent and Mediterranean influences arriving via trade. Their capital appears to have been near modern Canterbury, although Caesar makes no mention of seizing it during his invasions. Caesar describes them as having four kings in 54 BCE, but how exactly the power structure was organized is unknown.[275] Later Cantiaci rulers, based on the coinage they minted, appear to have ruled singly. Bordering the Cantiaci to the west were the Regnenses and, further west along the coast, the Belgae, Durotriges and Dumnonii. While Caesar's army did not venture into the territory of the above four tribes, it is perfectly feasible that representatives were present in the allied British army that was assembled in 54 BCE, especially noble charioteers.

Immediately north of the Thames was the territory of Cassivellaunus.[276] At the time of the invasions, his tribe had been a highly aggressive expansionist tribe centered around Verulamion (St. Albans) and held many smaller tribes as vassals, a number of whom defected to Caesar in 54 BCE. Shortly before the first invasion, he forced the Trinovantes into submission (this will be discussed in chapter 5). The exact identity of Cassivellaunus' tribe is uncertain but it occupied the future territory of the Catuvellauni.[277] The Catuvellauni remained very prosperous up to 43 CE and would form the core of initial resistance to the Roman conquest. East of the Catuvellauni were the Trinovantes, reputed by Caesar to be the strongest tribe in Britain, but at the time of the invasion subjected to Cassivellaunus' rule. Their capital was located at Camoludunum

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[274]   Alec Detsicas, *The Cantiaci* (Glouchester: Sutton, 1983), 1.
[275] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.22.
[276]   Keith Branigan, *The Catuvellauni* (Glouchester: Sutton, 1985), 1.
[277] The debate over Cassivellaunus's tribe will be discussed in detail in chapter 6.

(Colchester).[278] Together with the Catuvellauni, their territory came to form the core of the later Roman province of Britannia.

North of the Catuvellauni and Trinovantes were the Iceni. It is speculated that the name of one of the tribes (Cenimagni), which would surrender to Caesar in 54 BCE, was possibly a corruption of the tribal name Iceni Magni or Great Iceni.[279] There is no firm evidence for this theory, but the Iceni became voluntary allies during 43 CE and remained more or less peaceful until the great revolt of 61 CE. West of the Catuvellauni were the Atrebates and Dobunni. Again, neither tribe is referenced directly by Caesar but it is likely that warriors from these groups participated in resisting the Roman incursions. The Atrebates share their name with a Belgic tribe in Gaul, providing further supporting evidence of the cultural links between the two regions.[280] Figure 5 illustrates the areal extent of these tribes in Britain.

The exact numbers of Britons that were able to assemble in 55 BCE are, unfortunately, unknown, but they most likely equaled or surpassed the Romans in numbers. It is also unknown what proportion of this army was cavalry or chariots. If the army was simply made up of the local tribes, with small detachments and individuals from neighboring territories, it could not have amounted to more than a hundred chariots and proportionally more cavalry. There were not enough mounted units, at least, to hold back the Romans on their own. Caesar records the Britons as being positioned atop the cliffs around Dover.[281] The Britons would have had ample warning about Caesar's intentions, both from merchants and from their own ambassadors. They likely knew that

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[278]   Rosalind Dunnett, *The Trinovantes* (London: Duckworth, 1975), 4.
[279] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 45.
[280] Frere, *Britannia*, 30.
[281] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.23.

Caesar was ready to sail at any moment. Therefore, they would have been able to keep their forces in readiness, but not yet concentrated, to avoid supply problems. Sentries were probably stationed on the cliffs and had spotted the Romans on approach, and messengers were likely then sent to various settlements in order to sound the alarm. The pause while the Romans waited for their transports to rally and the tides to shift also would have allowed the Britons to concentrate troops. As the Romans headed north, the Britons followed on land, with their cavalry and chariots outdistancing the infantry.[282] It is possible that the infantry never arrived at the landing site before the Romans began landing, leaving only the mounted units to oppose the landing.

An opposed beach landing is one of the most difficult military operations to undertake, and the Roman landing was no different. According to Caesar, one of the main problems facing the Romans was that the transports, which had not been designed to land personnel or cargo on an open beach, drew too much water, which led the disembarking legionaries to drop up to their necks in the sea.[283] Encumbered by their armour and equipment, the legionaries were not only required to make their way to shore over unknown sea bottom conditions but also attempt to defend themselves. The Britons, at least their cavalry and charioteers, familiar with the terrain, employed a number of offensive options. They were able to either stand off and throw javelins and other missiles, or could drive their horses into the water, giving them a significant height advantage over the floundering legionaries. In response to the stalled landing, Caesar ordered the warships, the like of which he claims the Britons had never seen, likely crewed by either skirmishers or legionaries, to beach themselves and provide support fire

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[282] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 316.
[283] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.24.

on the British flanks with artillery, arrows and slings.[284] This succeeded in driving the Britons back out of range, but the legionaries were still reluctant to disembark in the face of a waiting enemy. At this point, Caesar records that the *aquilifer* of the tenth legion jumped overboard and began to advance toward shore while exhorting his comrades to do their duty to their general and prevent the eagle standard from being taken.[285] To prevent this disgrace, the legionaries followed and in turn inspired other troops to disembark.

The conditions appear to have been chaotic, with the legionaries being unable to form ranks or even proper units in the surf. The Britons were able to bring their horse against parties of legionaries who appeared to be isolated or in difficulty, and continued their own missile fire.[286] If the situation was as confused as Caesar records, it would have been difficult for the Roman ranged weapons on the warships to lend support without endangering their own men. To compensate for this, Caesar dispatched ships' boats and scout vessels to assist any troops who appeared in danger of being overwhelmed. Eventually, some of the legionaries managed to reach dry land, form some semblance of ranks and charge the enemy. As mentioned, the British infantry probably had not managed to arrive in time for the battle, another incentive for Caesar to have landed immediately, and the cavalry and chariots would not have had either the numbers or energy to resist properly-formed infantry.[287] The Britons fled but were able to escape with minimal loss, as the Romans lacked cavalry to pursue. The British infantry, when they heard that the Romans were ashore in force and that their own cavalry had fled, also either stopped to wait for further word or dispersed to their homes. Without cavalry, Caesar could not pursue, and it would have been foolish to have allowed his own infantry

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[284] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.25.
[285] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.25.
[286] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.26.
[287] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 317.

to pursue the enemy into unknown terrain so late in the day. The Romans still needed to construct a camp on suitable ground as well as unload supplies and draw the warships onshore.[288]

The Roman landing in the face of resistance had evidently impressed the Britons, as Caesar records that they almost immediately began sending ambassadors to offer submission and hostages.[289] They also brought Caesar's representative Commius who had earlier been imprisoned on landing in Britain. Commius had with him thirty mounted retainers, which gave the Romans at least some cavalry, as well as more information about the immediate vicinity.[290] For his part, Caesar complained that, as tribal ambassadors had already agreed to peace terms in Gaul, he had been attacked without provocation (at least from the Roman perspective). Nevertheless, Caesar consented to peace in exchange for hostages, some of which were delivered immediately while others had to be summoned from a greater distance away. At the same time, the tribal chieftains began to gather at the Roman camp to formally offer submission, and their people were ordered to return to their farms.[291] While waiting for the hostages and unable to safely move or scout without cavalry, the Romans, with few supplies of their own, began harvesting local grain fields. The warships were drawn up onto land while the transports were left at anchor.[292]

Some four days (or a week depending on Olson's reconstruction) after landing (the 30th/31st), the cavalry transports managed to sail on a favorable breeze and came within sight of the camp in the late afternoon or early evening.[293] At this point, a fierce

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[288] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.29.
[289] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.27.
[290] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.27, 4.35.
[291] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.27.
[292] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 318.
[293] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.28.

storm blew up, preventing these transports from landing and either driving some back to their embarkation port or scattering them along the coast to the south. These tried to cast anchor but were eventually driven back to the continent.

The fact that these ships managed to navigate the channel at night in severe weather lends credence to the suggestion that the transports were manned by experienced Gallic crews rather than Romans, although what condition the men and horses were in is questionable. In any event, this storm permanently deprived Caesar of his cavalry, greatly limiting the scope of operations. The legions would not be able operate effectively without becoming exposed to enemy cavalry, while the latter could disengage at will; in effect, the Romans were pinned to the immediate environs of their coastal camp.[294] The same night there was a full moon, which brought a very high tide and also allows us to date this expedition. Caesar claims that he and his men were unaware that this would happen or, more likely, they were unaware how high the tides would get in the channel.[295] Why they did not know this is uncertain, as the Romans had been in the region long enough to see a number of full moons, the coastal Gallic tribes would certainly have known, and high ocean tides had been recorded by Pytheas.[296] Perhaps the Gauls refused to divulge this information for the same reasons they apparently refused to share information regarding the island.[297] It is also possible that Caesar had simply disregarded warnings and subsequently claimed blanket ignorance in an effort to cover up this mistake. It has also been suggested that the tide was in fact a storm surge and that the damage was not Caesar's fault at all.[298] Regardless, the combination of unexpectedly high

[294] Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 341.
[295] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.29.
[296] Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*, 10 vols. Trans. H. Rackham (London: W. Heineman, 1938-1962), 1:2.99.217.
[297] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 37-38.
[298] Gerald Grange, *The Roman Invasions of Britain,* (Stroud: Tempus Publishing, ltd. 2005), 96.

tides and a severe storm caused extensive damage to the anchored Roman fleet that the

Romans were helpless to prevent.[299] A number of ships were destroyed outright, while

most of the rest were damaged beyond serviceability. This naturally caused great dismay

among the legionaries, as they had next to no cavalry, no serviceable ships, no supplies to

repair the ships, and no food supplies for the oncoming winter.

These troubles were obvious to the British chieftains who had gathered in the

Roman camp to offer submission. To them, it would have seemed to be a golden

opportunity. From their perspective, if this army could be trapped and either starved into

submission over the winter or outright destroyed, it might discourage further Roman

expeditions.[300] They might have been right, at least in the short term, as news of Caesar's

defeat or death would surely have caused immediate revolts and disorder in both Gaul

and Rome, as well as possibly prompting Germanic incursions.[301] The Romans would

have had their hands full for the immediate future. It was possible, or even probable, that

eventually Caesar or a new Roman commander would attempt to avenge the defeat at

some point, but that would have not been considered by the chieftains, who were

unfamiliar with Roman attitudes to their enemies.[302] Therefore, they began to leave camp

on various pretexts, secretly gathering forces. Preoccupied with their ships, the Romans

appear to have been unaware of these plans, although Caesar claims to have been at least

somewhat suspicious.[303] This suspicion was not unnatural, given the situation faced by

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[299] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.29.
[300] Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 342.
[301] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.26-58. The severity of Ambiorix's revolt, which broke out following Caesar's return from Britain in 54 BCE, can serve to illustrate the potential disorders which could have occurred if the Romans had lost their leader and a quarter of their army in 55 BCE. Caesar implies that the Germans refused to cross the Rhine in 54 BCE due to their fear of him and his army (5.55).
[302] Southern, *The Roman Army*, 67. An enemy that fought the Romans remained an enemy until they had been utterly defeated and brought into a client relationship. The Romans had only been active in the region a few years, not enough time for this attitude to be properly demonstrated.
[303] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 31.

80

the Romans, but this claim was nonetheless possibly an excuse written after the fact. He accelerated ship repairs, cannibalizing the worse-damaged vessels for parts and sending to the continent for other supplies. The legionaries, who were naturally highly motivated to do this work, were able to get the fleet somewhat seaworthy, although twelve ships were totally lost in the storm or subsequently broken up.

While the repairs were proceeding, both the Roman harvesting and British battle preparations continued. By this time, the Romans had mostly exhausted the fields near the camp, with one of the last convenient fields being out of sight and near a wood.[304] The British chieftains correctly surmised that the Romans would come to harvest it and had concealed themselves in the woods. Again, it is unknown how large the British force was and how it was composed, led, or organized, but it most likely included infantry in addition to the mobile units. The forces would have had to have been large enough, however, to seriously threaten a legion (four to five thousand men). The soldiers of the seventh legion were duly sent to the fields and, not suspecting hostilities, as Caesar claims, dispersed to harvest, stacking their weapons and equipment. When the seventh was thus dispersed and disorganized, the British attacked, apparently gaining complete tactical surprise, while surrounding the Romans with cavalry and chariots and preventing the legionaries from reorganizing. How the British were able to achieve such surprise is a matter for conjecture. The lack of cavalry would have prevented reconnaissance, and it is also possible that the Romans had grown complacent and placed an inadequate guard to protect the working party, as was standard practice.[305] One theory, held by Holmes, and based on a reading of the relevant passage, is that the entire seventh legion was dispersed

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[304] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.32.
[305] Southern, *The Roman Army*, 193. Typically, when building a camp or foraging the Romans would order a portion of their infantry and all their cavalry to protect the workers.

harvesting with no pickets whatsoever. Caesar does not mention any guards being overwhelmed, and therefore places the responsibility for this near disaster on whatever legate commanded the legion.[306] However it happened, the seventh was placed in a difficult position as it could not organize itself without being exposed to a rain of projectiles or cavalry charges.

The first Caesar knew of these affairs was when the camp guards noticed a large dust cloud on the horizon.[307] Caesar immediately ordered the cohorts on guard to march, two others to relieve them and protect the camp, and the rest of the tenth legion, presumably either resting or working on the ships, to arm themselves and to march as quickly as possible. He found the seventh under missile attack from all sides and barely holding position. This was the first time the Romans had faced British chariots in an open battle; during the landing they would not have employed their standard battle tactics. The Romans encountered severe difficulty in dealing with them. As it was, the arrival of the tenth legion in battle order caused the Britons to pull back and allowed the seventh to organize itself properly. Caesar declined to renew combat; the legionaries would have had difficulty coming to grips with the enemy cavalry and chariots and would have been exposed to the latter when engaging enemy infantry. Instead, Caesar led his legions, with unspecified losses to the seventh, back to camp, while the Britons also left the field. [308] This action only encouraged the Britons in that, while they failed to destroy the seventh legion, they had clearly bested it and prevented the Romans from harvesting the crop.

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[306] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 321.
[307] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.32.
[308] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.34.

Several storms broke out over the next few days, severe enough to keep the

Romans in their camp and prevent the Britons from attacking.[309] The Britons used this

interlude to summon reinforcements from more distant tribes, citing the small numbers of

Romans present, the perceived weakness of the Romans, and the prospect of booty from

the Roman camp. A large force of cavalry, chariots and infantry was gathered and

advanced on the camp. Caesar led the legions, including the thirty horsemen of Commius,

out to meet them. Caesar provides no details about the battle unfortunately, only that the

British could not overcome the disciplined legions and were quickly routed.[310] The

Romans, including Commius' men, killed "not a few", likely infantry, in their pursuit.

However, it is likely that most of the British, especially the cavalry and chariots

escaped.[311] In any event, the Romans proceeded to destroy everything they could safely

reach in the immediate area and returned to their camp. Following this defeat, tribal

representatives again came to Caesar to beg for peace. Caesar doubled the numbers of

hostages that had been previously demanded from them and instructed that they be

delivered to him on the continent.[312]

By this time, the autumn equinox was approaching and Caesar did not wish to

hazard the channel crossing in winter storms, especially with a damaged fleet. Therefore,

taking advantage of fair weather, the Romans sailed a little after midnight sometime

before the equinox.[313] All the ships reached the continent safely, although he does not

mention which port they returned to, only that it was in the territory of the Morini. It was

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[309] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.34. The Romans had no reason to risk a battle and British chariots and horses would have been vulnerable in muddy conditions.

[310] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.35.

[311] See chapter 1 for discussion of this battle and in relation to Caesar's manipulation of reality in the commentaries.

[312] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.36.

[313] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.36.

possible, however, they returned to Boulogne. Two of the ships were blown further south from the others and the 300 troops onboard landed and began marching overland to rejoin Caesar. The Morini, inspired, as Caesar claims, by the hope of booty, surrounded them and demanded their surrender.[314] The legionaries defended themselves until the Romans' own cavalry arrived and dispatched a good number of the enemy. This incident would indicate that conditions in Gaul were not as settled as Caesar had stated, especially along the coastal areas. The next day, the seventh and tenth legions were sent on a punitive expedition among the Morini, demonstrating that, despite the troubles in Britain, both units remained fully operational.[315] Other legions were led against the Manipii before the legions were placed into winter quarters and Caesar left to conduct business in Cisalpine Gaul.

The first Roman invasion had lasted from late August (roughly the 22nd/23rd or 26th/27th) to mid September, roughly two to three weeks, and was, quite frankly, not much of a success from a military standpoint. If the intention had been for a full scale invasion and conquest, it had obviously failed completely.[316] Not a single Roman soldier remained in Britain, and while the local tribes nominally recognized Roman power, only two tribes felt sufficiently threatened to send the promised hostages.[317] If the invasion had been, as was far more likely, a military reconnaissance in force, then it had also partially failed. Hampered by the lack of cavalry, the need to forage for food, and the need to repair the fleet before winter, the Romans had been largely unable to gather first-hand information beyond the immediate vicinity of the landing site.[318] On the other hand, the Romans did

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[314] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.37.
[315] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.38.
[316] Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 3:39.53. Dio states that Caesar got nothing but glory from Britain.
[317] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.38.
[318] Frere, *Britannia*, 32.

gain experience and information about both the military capability of the Britons and the conditions of the Channel.[319] The two main problems, the lack of cavalry which would have given far more operational flexibility to the legions, and the damage to the fleet were the result of a storm. It can be argued that Caesar's impatience to launch a campaign, despite the lateness of the season, ensured that the weather was more likely to be unsettled and go against his plans.[320] This was not entirely Caesar's fault, however, as the weather in the Channel has always been somewhat unpredictable. The storms that caused severe damage to Allied supply arrangements in mid-summer, 1944, serve as a more recent example.[321]

If militarily and financially unsuccessful, the 55 BCE invasion was a great propaganda success and certainly succeeded in keeping Caesar's name in the Romans' minds. The invasion of an unknown island generated great public excitement in Rome. The senate, on receiving dispatches, voted for twenty days of public thanksgiving.[322] This response would have encouraged Caesar to launch a full scale invasion of the island. The end of Caesar's Fourth Book in his commentaries certainly hints at a second operation, especially emphasizing that most of the British tribes had failed to deliver hostages and, therefore, refused to recognize Roman supremacy.[323] According to traditional Roman attitudes, this made the Britons a threat to Rome, and her position in Gaul would be insecure until they were dealt with. It can thus be surmised that Caesar had ample motives for a second renewed invasion, both official and personal. He also took to heart what he learned from the 55 BCE invasion in his 54 BCE preparations. For their part, the

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[319] Frere, *Britannia*, 32.
[320] Peddie, *Conquest*, 9.
[321] Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 350.
[322] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.38.
[323] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.38.

Britons could have congratulated themselves on forcing Caesar off the island and might have hoped that, after the trouble the Romans had, they would not return, therefore encouraging them in not sending the promised hostages to Caesar. Word of Caesar's orders to the wintering legions, brought to the island by merchants, would have quickly alarmed them, however. The legions had been instructed to build ships and would definitely be returning.[324]

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[324] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.1.

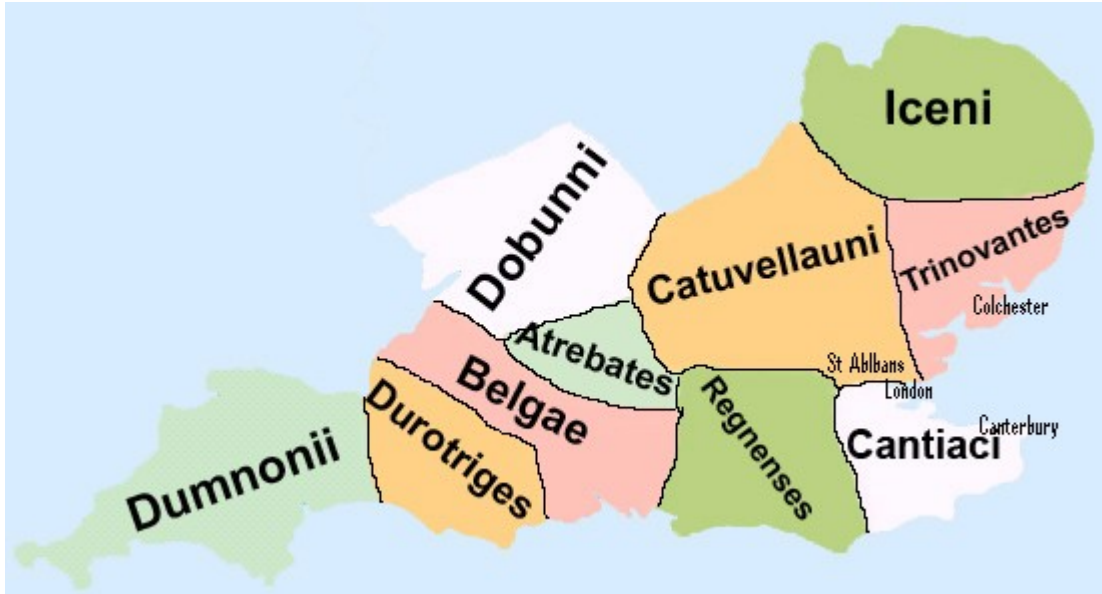Figure 5: Yorkshirian, *Diagram of the Tribes of Southern Britain*, released as open source, 2007, http://upload.wikimedia.org/wikipedia/commons/8/89/England_Celtic_tribes_-_South.png, (Modified by author Oct, 2010).

Figure 6: Kathy Noltze, "Map of Kent", for *Folkstone and Bits of Britain*, Magnum Travel Inc., 2009, http://www.propertypurveyor.com/FolkestoneMapLowRes.jpg, (Modified by Author Jan, 2011).

Chapter 5: 54 BCE Invasion

Caesar launched his second, larger invasion in mid-summer, 54 BCE, as a full-scale campaign. This campaign is described in book five of his commentaries on the Gallic war. This chapter will consider the second invasion in the same manner as the first, regarding the examination of motives, interpreting decisions and evaluating the results.

As discussed in the previous chapter, the small size, hasty preparation, lack of heavy equipment, and the launching of the operation so late in the campaigning season most likely meant that the 55 BCE expedition was probably a reconnaissance in force, which left Caesar's original goals either partially or completely unfulfilled. The nominal reason for the expedition, essentially to prevent tribes on the island from interfering in the new arrangements being made in Gaul, remained unresolved. Only two of the tribes actually delivered the hostages that had been levied following their submission to Caesar, prior to his departure from the island, and, therefore, the island tribes remained a threat.[325] Although this was a reasonable excuse for a second campaign, other Roman writers state that he would have gone regardless and found some other pretext to justify the expedition.[326] Of the other objectives, such as wealth and glory, the first was unfulfilled, as the Romans had been unable to range far enough to gather much in the way of riches, or even slaves. The invasion had nonetheless generated extensive excitement in Rome and the Senate had proclaimed twenty days of thanksgiving for this feat. The Roman public was thus primed for a future operation to properly conquer the island; Cicero's letters to his brother and friends reflect this excitement.[327] Some scholars, such as Webster, have speculated that this attitude was actually encouraged by Caesar's rivals in

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[325] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.38.
[326] Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 3:40.1.2.
[327] Cicero, *Letters to his friends (Letters to his Brother Quintus)*, 3:2.16.4.

the Senate. According to this theory, if Caesar received enough public encouragement then he would attempt a second expedition, with the high probability of his career being literally shipwrecked.[328] However, the fact that preparations, such as ship construction, were apparently ordered to begin almost immediately after the first expedition, before much word could come from Rome, might indicate that public opinion was of little influence in Caesar's decision to launch a second invasion.

Prior to travelling to Cisalpine Gaul to conduct government and judicial business required of the governor, Caesar had ordered his legions into winter quarters in Belgic territory and instructed his legates to construct ships for the following year.[329] He had evidently learned from the disembarkation and transport problems of 55 BCE and incorporated these lessons into the new transport designs. These ships were designed to have a shallow draft to ensure the legionaries could disembark in shallow water, thus hopefully avoiding the difficult landing and shore battle of the previous year. In addition, a shallow keel made it easier to drag the ships up onto the beach which, in the absence of a sheltered port or anchorage, would help avoid the storm damage of the previous year. They were also somewhat broader than normal to allow them to carry more horses and supplies. In the manner of Mediterranean galleys, they were equipped with both oars and sails. This had two advantages: first, the ships would not be entirely at the mercy of tides and winds and, if necessary, the rowers could go against the tides to reach the landing point, avoiding the cavalry transport problem of the previous year. In addition, the use of oars meant that the ships could be largely crewed by legionaries, preventing the need to feed ship crews who would be largely useless after landing.[330] Oars would mean,

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[328] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 37.
[329] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.1
[330] S.L. Mohler, "Caesar and the Channel Tides," *The Classical Weekly* 38, no 24 (May 21, 1945), 191.

however, that the transports would have relatively low sides, rendering them vulnerable

to rough seas, and may have contributed, as will be seen, to damage the fleet sustained

from storms.[331] These vessels were built over the winter by craftsmen in the legions and

brought from various estuaries to the embarkation port, with specialist supplies, such as

tackle, being brought from Spain.[332] By the time Caesar arrived in the spring, about 600

transports had been produced, in addition to twenty eight warships, most of which were

left over from the previous year's operation.[333]

The commentaries indicate that he ordered the fleet to rally at a harbour he called

Portus Itius, located somewhere in the Pas de Calais area.[334] The location of this port has

been a matter of considerable debate among historians. There are two primary candidates

endorsed by most historians: Boulogne and Wissant. The majority of scholars agree that

Boulogne was the embarkation port for 55 BCE.[335] The distance to the secondary cavalry

port of that year roughly corresponds to the distance between Boulogne and modern

Ambleteuse and is one of the main arguments used by proponents of Boulogne as the port

of embarkation by the invasion fleet in 55 BCE.[336] The cavalry port is also specifically

mentioned as being more northerly than the main port which lends further support to

Ambleteuse and Boulogne.[337] If Caesar had embarked at Wissant, then the cavalry

transports would have been berthed at Sangatte.[338] The storm which scattered the cavalry

transports, described in chapter four, is one of the main objections to Sangatte being the

cavalry port, and therefore Wissant as the main port of embarkation. To drive the

[331] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 326.
[332] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.1.
[333] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.2.
[334] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.2.
[335] Frere, *Britannia*, 31.
[336] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 586-7.
[337] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.28.
[338] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 567.

transports south along the coast the storm would have to blow from the north or north-

east.[339] In addition, the tidal flow would have begun shifting to the southwest as the

transports reached the landing point. For some of the transports to return to Sangatte from

Deal under these conditions, they would have to be blown at an almost right angle, an

extremely implausible circumstance even without violent weather.[340] Ambleteuse, further

south on the French coast, would have been much easier to reach in this situation.

Boulogne is also favored due to its sheltered harbour, something Wissant lacks, important

when considering that the transports used in 55 BCE were likely deep drafted vessels.

This strengthens the case for Boulogne and Ambleteuse being the ports of embarkation in

55 BCE.

In 54 BCE, Caesar describes Portius Itius as being the most convenient point for a

passage across the Channel (about thirty Roman miles in his estimation) and while both

Boulogne and Wissant fit this positioning, the latter is, overall, less distant from the

island.[341] However, an examination of present day wind and tidal patterns suggests that it

is easier to make landfall around Dover from Boulogne, and convenience should be

interpreted more in terms of ease of travel than distance.[342] In the same vein, supporters of

Boulogne as Portus Itius cite the fact that the port was the primary transit port for travel

to the island under the Empire, with several roads converging there. The lack of a

corresponding road system at Wissant is viewed as more evidence for favouring

Boulogne as the embarkation point.[343] This harbour would provide shelter to the loading

and waiting ships, whereas there is no 'proper' harbor at Wissant, although the Romans

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[339] S.L.Mohler, "Caesar and the Channel Tides," 190.
[340] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 582.
[341] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 557.
[342] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 585-6
[343] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 583.

could apply the term 'portus' to anything from a full harbor to a temporary anchorage.[344]

Finally, Caesar records that he gathered his entire army at the port prior to embarking.[345]

Comprising eight legions and four to five thousand cavalry, the army required

considerable space for encampment. There is ample room around Boulogne; Napoleon

would camp his Grande Armee in roughly the same location (and for the same purpose)

in 1803, but the terrain around Wissant is somewhat less accommodating.[346] In addition,

this force needed to be fed for a considerable period and the lack of a road system or

proper port made Wissant much more inconvenient (but not insurmountable) for this

requirement.[347]

While the above evidence supports Boulogne being Portus Itius, R. T. Holmes

presents an objection regarding Boulogne's suitability as an invasion port. His argument

maintains that it is virtually impossible to sail a large fleet out of Boulogne in a single

tide without severe scattering.[348] Referring to Napoleon once again, a study by a French

naval captain shows that Napoleon would have been hard pressed to sail 100 ships from

Boulogne on a single tide, and with a favorable wind.[349] The French vanguard ships

would have had to anchor in an exposed roadstead waiting for the rest of the fleet to get

out of the port, and would have been correspondingly vulnerable to both weather and the

British Royal Navy. This vulnerability would have increased if the fleet had to wait at

anchor for a tide to allow other elements to sail. Caesar, with a fleet eight times this size

(albeit with smaller ships), would have had even more difficulty; his fleet, no matter how

many of the ships were able to sail at one time, would have become very scattered and

[344] Thomas Holmes, "Last Words on Portius Itius," *Classical Review* 23, (1909), 78.
[345] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.5.
[346] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 306-307.
[347] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 583-584.
[348] Holmes, "Last Words on Portius Itius," 78.
[349] Holmes, "Last Words on Portius Itius," 79.

disorganized. The leading division of the fleet could reach Britain before a large portion had sailed, and Caesar's writings strongly suggest the fleet sailed in one body.[350] It is possible, of course, that Caesar's fleet sailed from Boulogne in divisions as time permitted, anchored in the roadstead to wait for all to gather, and then sailed the rest of the way simultaneously. [351] However, the complexity, risk and disorganization would have been massive, despite not having an enemy fleet waiting to pounce like Napoleon did. While experienced harbour masters agree that Caesar could have sailed a fleet of eighty ships on one tide, they were probably still somewhat disorganized and scattered.[352] The wait off Dover may have been partially planned to allow stragglers to catch up.

Wissant, it is argued by Holmes, avoids this problem. The lack of a sheltering harbour is mitigated by the fact that the transports were designed to be drawn up and beached, something that was extremely difficult with the heavier and deeper-drafted transports of the previous year.[353] The ships could have been drawn up safely beyond the high-water mark. The modern landforms around Wissant, relatively steep dunes, would not permit this, but there has been a general coastal subsidence in the region since Roman times, which might well have eliminated a high ground area where the ships could have been safely drawn up.[354] Caesar mentions a sudden southwestern wind which would have been ideal for sailing from Wissant: the ships could be drawn down to the water, loaded and sailed en-masse.[355] This would have been a great deal of work, but worth the effort to keep the fleet concentrated and organized while spending as little time at sea as possible. Another objection to Wissant being the embarkation point is the record of Caesar's

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[350] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.8.
[351] Holmes, "Last Words on Portius Itius," 79-80.
[352] Holmes, "Last Words on Portius Itius," 78.
[353] Holmes, "Last Words on Portius Itius," 77.
[354] Holmes, "Last Words on Portius Itius," 78.
[355] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.8.

deputy Labienus remaining behind in Portius Itius and later building sixty ships: Wissant

had no ship-building facilities.[356] Labienus had, however, been ordered to hold the ports,

plural; therefore, the ships could easily have been built in Boulogne. Finally, an

encamped army could still be supplied at Wissant, just not as efficiently as at Boulogne;

Caesar's need for coordinated sailing might have outweighed this inconvenience.[357] In

conclusion, both Wissant and Boulogne have evidence and support for being Portius

Itius. Boulogne, however, remains the most popular option among most modern

historians. It is, however, impossible at present to prove conclusively which port was the

site of the embarkation point for the second expedition.

Just as in 55 BCE, Caesar needed to take action to secure Gaul before departing.

He led four legions and eight hundred cavalry into the territory of the Treveri, as they had

not obeyed his commands and had been agitating the Germans across the Rhine.[358]

Influence in the tribe was disputed between two candidates, Cingetorix and Indutiomarus,

with the former coming to Caesar for aid. Alarmed by the oncoming Roman army, the

Treveri came to terms, presenting hostages and reconciling themselves to Cingetorix's

leadership at Caesar's behest. Caesar gives the reason for his relatively quick political

and military actions here as a desire not to be bogged down in Treveri territory.[359]

Following this brief campaign, Caesar returned to Portus Itius, sometime in late May or

early June, with his entire army and found the fleet ready to sail, except for sixty ships

which had been blown back to their point of origin. A north-west wind, however, delayed

his departure for twenty-five days.[360]

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[356] Holmes, "Last Words on Portius Itius," 78.
[357] Holmes, "Last Words on Portius Itius," 80.
[358] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.2-3.
[359] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.4.
[360] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.5, 5.7.

During this time, he confronted and resolved another potentially destabilizing element. He had gathered together, and planned to take with him to Britain as hostages, the untrustworthy chiefs of Gaul in order to prevent trouble in his absence.[361] One of these, Dumnorix of the Aedui, who has already been mentioned in connection with the Helvetii campaign, was unwilling to accompany Caesar, making excuses ranging from fear of sea travel to religious reasons, all to no avail.[362] He then tried to agitate the other chiefs by claiming that Caesar intended to take them to Britain in order to dispose of them. Finally, when the wind shifted and the troops and horses were ordered to begin loading, Dumnorix and a group of retainers fled. Caesar ordered his cavalry to pursue and the chieftain was killed in the ensuing skirmish. His death removed a destabilizing element in Gaul for the short-term, and served as a brutal demonstration of Caesar's power but served to anger some of his allies.[363] These two actions appear to have at least temporarily stabilized Gaul and can be interpreted as evidence that he intended to be away for a considerable time, possibly over the winter. Unrest, however, was quickly renewed and was one of Caesar's major reasons for returning to Gaul instead of trying to winter in Britain.

Caesar's second invasion was much larger and more powerful than the first but it is difficult to determine whether it was an attempt at full conquest or a large-scale punitive campaign.[364] At the very least, Caesar was likely prepared to winter in Britain if circumstances in Gaul permitted it.[365] The core of the invasion force was composed of five legions.[366] Of these, only the seventh is referred to by number, probably included due

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[361] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.5.
[362] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.6-7.
[363] Rankin, *Celts and the Classical World*, 129.
[364] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 38.
[365] Brady, "Caesar and Britain," 308.
[366] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.8, 5.9 (Evidence of the presence of the Seventh Legion).

to its experience the previous year. It is for this same reason that the tenth was likely another of the participating legions. Discerning the identities of the remaining three is more difficult, but it is logical that Caesar would want his best troops for such a risky operation. Therefore, the experienced eighth and ninth legions were likely included. The last legion would have been either the eleventh or twelfth. The latter is perhaps more likely, as it had proven itself in fighting alpine tribes, while the former had not distinguished itself enough to warrant any special mention by Caesar.[367] None of these units were up to strength, and probably numbered around 18-20,000 men in total.[368] In addition, Caesar brought half of his Gallic cavalry, consisting of 2,000 men and horses, and an indeterminate number of auxiliaries.[369] The remaining three legions and cavalry were left under the command of Labienus to keep an eye on Gaul, hold the ports, and maintain food shipments to the army in Britain. This last task illustrates that Caesar desired to depend on his own supplies instead of foraging, which would indicate a desire for speed and/or recognition of the danger posed to foragers by British chariotry and cavalry, as well as a determination to wage an extended campaign.

The Britons would have been made aware of the Roman preparations by merchants and traders; the scale of ship construction alone made secrecy impossible. They would have had the winter and spring to make their own preparations. Exactly what these might have entailed is, unfortunately, unknown. One possibility is that the various tribes discussed temporarily putting aside their rivalries and agreed to come together when the Roman invasion appeared imminent. Some support for this view is that the Britons appear, until the defeat at the Thames and subsequent defections, to have

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[367] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 3.1-6.
[368] Brady, "Caesar and Britain," 307.
[369] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.8.

presented a somewhat unified coalition. At the very least Caesar does not describe

playing one tribe against the others as he had repeatedly done in Gaul.[370] This theory

would suggest that the Britons had come to some sort of pact or agreement beforehand.

The warlord Cassivellaunus, whose territory was north of the Thames, was

elected overall commander.[371] Caesar states, and most historians believe, that this

appointment came following the Roman landing, but again, some discussion had possibly

gone on beforehand. This chief had previously been at war with many other tribes, and

had recently conquered the neighbouring Trinovantes and killed their king. This is

particularly significant because the king's son, Mandubracius, had fled to Caesar, seeking

aid.[372] This gave the Romans the prospect of a large, friendly tribal ally if they could

restore him to power, providing them with reinforcements and reliable local supplies. The

Britons, like all Celtic armies, would have been unable to assemble and keep an army

standing due to their inferior supply arrangements, which resulted in little initial

coordination.[373] The best they could likely hope for was that the coastal tribes had enough

forewarning to gather an army to oppose the landings. If the Romans could be delayed,

even for a short while, it would provide time for a larger tribal army to assemble.

It is more difficult to pin down the date for the 54 BCE invasion, as Caesar does

not mention any astronomical events like the full moon he referred to in 55 BCE.[374]

Dating this campaign is largely determined by converting the pre-Julian Roman calendar.

At this point the Roman calendar was increasingly out of sync with the actual seasons,

due to the interposition of intercalary months by officials for political purposes. However,

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[370] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 2.3. In this example, Caesar used the Remi against the other Belgic tribes in 57 BCE.
[371] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.11.
[372] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.20.
[373] Penrose, *Rome and her Enemies*, 140.
[374] See Timeline in Appendix A for this and subsequent discussion of dates.

modern scholars have been able, by studying evidence for these intercalary months, to make the conversion to our current system. Given the extensive preparation over the winter, and a desire for as much campaigning time as possible, coupled with delays imposed by Gauls and wind, the start date can reasonably be placed as occurring in early July. The first relevant reference is a letter from Cicero to his brother referring to another (undated) letter in which the latter related his arrival in Britain.[375] Cicero's letter is believed to have been written at the end of August (pre-Julian), for he refers to the *Comitia* being put off until September, and a trial scheduled to take place after the letter was written would be happening soon.[376] Elsewhere in his letters this trial is stated as occurring in the first few days of September (pre-Julian) and therefore Cicero's letter could not have been written after September first (pre-Julian).[377] Letters to and from Britain took an average of 25 to 30 days to make the journey, meaning that Quintus's letter was written sometime at the end of July (pre-Julian).[378] Converting to the Julian calendar, and assuming that Quintus would have written to his brother as soon as possible after landing, this gives us an approximate date of the first week of July (Julian) for the Romans' arrival in Britain. In addition, tidal flow conditions at this time would have had to have been somewhat similar to those of 55 BCE for the fleet to move like it had, meaning proximity to a full or new moon, which occurred on 6th/7th of July, 54 BCE.[379]

It is possible that the invasion would have been launched even as early as May but Caesar was forced to lead an army against the Treverii and the fleet was trapped in port

[375]   Cicero, *Letters to his Friends (Letters to his Brother Quintus)*, 3:2.16.4.
[376]   Cicero, *Letters to his Friends (Letters to his Brother Quintus)*, 3:2.16.3.
[377] Marcus Tullius Cicero, *Letters to Atticus,* Trans. E. O. Winstedt (London: W. Heinemann, 1962), 1:4.15.8.
[378]   Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 1:4.18.5. Cicero records receiving, on the 24th of October, a letter written by Caesar on the 25th of September- a travel time of 29 days.
[379] Mohler, "Caesar and the Channel Tides," 189-190.

for twenty-five days by contrary winds. The Roman fleet sailed about sunset, taking

advantage of a favourable south-west wind.[380] Even taking into account the sixty

transports that were unable to make Portius Itius, and Caesar is not clear whether these

were permanently absent or only when he first arrived at the port, the Roman fleet

consisted of eight hundred ships: Caesar names six hundred transports and twenty-eight

warships.[381] The excess is described as ships constructed by officers for their own

conveyance, although how these were designed, built and crewed is unknown. It has also

been suggested that a number of these private ships were owned by merchants from Gaul,

Italy and throughout the Mediterranean, eager to take advantage of the markets about to

be forced open by the Roman army and exploit the reputed wealth of the island.[382] It is

notable that this outside competition is exactly the sort of situation that would have been

feared by local merchants, and which might have made them so reluctant to divulge

information about Britain the previous year.

Caesar records that the wind died around midnight and that the fleet, running

north with the tide, ended up off course. At sunrise, Britain could be seen port astern,

meaning that the Romans were at least carried past the South Foreland, based on a

proposed landing zone between Deal and Sandwich.[383] The tide then began to turn south

west and the fleet, by virtue of rowing, made for the landing point, the transports keeping

pace with the warships through the efforts of hard-working legionaries, and arriving at

midday. [384] Caesar states that the landing point was the best place for disembarkation

based upon information learned the previous year. It is possible that interrogation of

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[380] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.8. See Fig. 7 for Roman movement in 54 BCE.
[381] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.2, 5.8.
[382] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 331.
[383] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.8.
[384] Mohler, "Caesar and the Tides," 190-191.

prisoners or an unspecified reconnaissance expedition had located a suitable landing

point elsewhere on the coast. It is far more likely, however, that he simply meant the

same general area that the Romans had landed in previously. Knowledge of both local

tribes and of the terrain in the area would alone make a landing there more favoured than

in a comparatively unknown location. In addition, the presence of Mandubracius would

mean that Caesar would want to land as close to the territory of the Trinovantes as

possible while spending the least time at sea. Therefore, it is felt that the Romans landed

in the same general area as the previous year.[385]

   Unlike in the previous year, the Roman landing was unopposed. Caesar credits the

sheer size of the fleet as frightening the Britons away.[386] This might well be the truth,

although the actual reasoning behind the absence of the Britons might be more

complicated. The Roman fleet had been ready to sail for at least a month and the Britons

would have been aware of this, as well as the arrival of Caesar and his army at the port.

They may well have assembled an army at this time, but the extended delay would have

rendered keeping it together extremely difficult.[387] There was also the problem of where

to concentrate this army, as there was no absolute guarantee as to where the Romans

would land. It is likely then, that the gathered forces, if any, would have dispersed and

hoped that they would have enough prior warning of any landing attempt in order to

concentrate an army. Alternatively, they could have decided beforehand not to contest the

landing, likely due to the reported size of the Roman fleet, but to delay action until

enough forces could be gathered. With either option, the only forces available would

have been almost purely local, as Caesar describes his fleet moving as one with minimal

[385] Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 348.

[386] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.8.

[387] Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 7:60.19.1-5. The situation in 43 CE was similar, with the Roman's delay in sailing causing the tribal army to disperse.

delay, preventing much in the way of reinforcement from the more inland areas.[388] The Britons may, very reasonably, have judged themselves incapable of confronting the massive Roman armada with the limited forces available.

The Roman army landed successfully and began to set up camp. While this was happening, Caesar would have sent out cavalry patrols to locate the enemy and gather intelligence. Prisoners collected during these forays revealed where the Britons, the local Kentish tribes in this case, were gathering.[389] It is at this point that Caesar made what many scholars view as a mistake that ruined the campaign's chances of success. He left ten cohorts, either an entire legion or selected from multiple legions, and three hundred cavalry under Quintus Atrius to guard the fleet and the camp and immediately led the rest inland at the third watch (midnight). The fleet was left at anchor instead of being drawn up on the beach as it was designed for, an activity that would have consumed time and energy, although not doing so had unfortunate consequences.

Caesar describes a twelve mile long forced march at night to a river, almost certainly the Stour if the Romans landed near Deal. There the next day the British cavalry and chariots attempted to engage them but were repulsed by the Roman cavalry, a possible indication that there still were not many tribesmen gathered.[390] The Britons withdrew to a fortified location within a forest, possibly a hill fort or *oppidum* at Big Bury Wood near modern Canterbury, and sought to strike out in small groups and delay the Romans.[391] The legionaries from the seventh formed a *testudo*, overlapping their shields above their heads to ward off projectiles, built an earthen ramp against the fortifications, and stormed the fort, driving their enemies out of the woods. Caesar

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[388] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.8.
[389] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.9.
[390] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.9.
[391] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.9.

declined to continue pursuit as the fighting had taken most of the day, and a camp needed to be constructed by the exhausted legionaries before nightfall.

The next morning, he divided his force into three columns and dispatched them in pursuit of the fleeing Britons.[392] These columns had travelled some distance, and their rearguards were just in sight of the camp, when a messenger arrived from Atrius. The messengers reported that a storm had blown up during the night and caused severe damage to the Roman fleet, with forty vessels destroyed outright.[393] Caesar immediately recalled his columns and returned to the coast. He resolved to beach all the vessels for repairs and protect them with a single large entrenchment (connected to the naval camp). The construction, beaching and salvaging of the damaged ships took about ten days. At the same time, Caesar set the craftsmen in the legions to work on the ships, summoned more from the continent, and ordered Labienus there to construct as many ships as possible. When the ships had been beached, Caesar resumed his advance, leaving the same force to guard the area, along with the craftsmen working on the ships.

The delay, however, was serious, if not decisive. The Britons had been given a breathing space with which to rally their forces and receive reinforcements.[394] Caesar reports that he encountered ever increasing numbers of Britons, now definitely led by Cassivellanus. It is for this reason that the storm and the resulting damage to the fleet can be viewed as the turning point to the campaign and a severe miscalculation on the part of Caesar. Prior to the storm, Caesar held the initiative, having succeeded in landing his army and dealing several defeats to the local tribes. He could have (relatively) easily continued to advance, forcing the pace of events, preventing the tribes from rallying and

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[392] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.10.
[393] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.10-11.
[394] Frere, *Britannia*, 34.

likely forcing their submission piecemeal.[395] Instead, Caesar was now facing an increasingly unified enemy and a concentrated army. This point is when some historians believe that the tribes put aside their differences and united: Caesar describes Cassivellaunus assuming command at this point of the campaign.[396] While it may be the time when the army started being assembled and command structure was formalized, some discussion would have had to have gone on beforehand: ten days is not a lot of time for a meeting among various chiefs along with the inevitable arguments and wrangling.

This disaster was the direct result of Caesar's decision to advance immediately instead of beaching and securing the fleet. It can be argued that the Romans might not have had time before the storm, but this argument is immaterial, as Caesar did not even try.[397] Caesar chose to try to claim the initiative rather than to try to secure his base. In a purely land campaign, this strategy would have been completely viable.[398] However, the unpredictable nature of the weather had already been experienced by the Romans and the transports had been specifically designed to be beached. The basic argument is that Caesar should have known better and planned accordingly.[399] It can be argued that Caesar would have been delayed and lost the initiative if he had beached the ships instead of marching immediately. Beaching, however, while labour intensive, was a relatively simple task and likely would not have taken more than a day. Caesar could have then started his advance while Atrius and his men stayed behind to build the defenses. The damage sustained by the fleet from the storm would have increased both the difficulty and time needed for the beaching. Caesar would have also been forced to wait for

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[395] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 39.
[396] Frere, *Britannia*, 35.
[397] Frere, *Britannia*, 34.
[398] Frere, *Britannia*, 35.
[399] Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 350.

inspection and evaluation of the damaged ships along with likely holding deliberations with his officers, further consuming time. In the beaching scenario, on the other hand, Caesar would have lost one or two days at most and kept both the initiative and his fleet.

This time period also might have been when Caesar wrote a letter to Cicero (stating that the situation in Britain was satisfactory, but that Quintus was not with Caesar on the latter's return to the coast), who referred to it in a letter to his brother, which was dated September 1st.[400] This date is pre-Julian, however, and has been calculated to be August 5th in the modern calendar. If the letter referenced above was actually written while the ships were being repaired and constructed, it would mean that the Romans landed in very late July and spent the rest of August campaigning. This would have been a relatively short time for the full campaign that Caesar likely had planned. It is more likely, however, that the August 5th letter was written at a latter point in the campaign. In the same letter to his brother, Cicero records that he had received a letter from Quintus in Britain dated August 10th (Pre-Julian).[401] Going with the same conversion, this translates roughly to July 13th, further invalidating the later sailing date. Unless Caesar had spent three unrecorded weeks at the coast, it is therefore likely the August 5th letter was written later, during a subsequent return to the coast, and the camp construction occurred in mid-July.

The Roman march, when it resumed in the direction of the Thames, was continually harassed by the enemy cavalry and chariotry, the Kentish tribes having been reinforced by Cassivellaunus' people and dependents from north of the Thames.[402] There were also possibly contingents from the recently-conquered Trinovantes and other tribes

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[400] Cicero, *Letters to his Friends (Letters to his Brother Quintus)*, 3:3.1.25.
[401] Cicero, *Letters to his Friends (Letters to his Brother Quintus)*, 3:3.1.13.
[402] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.15.

further afield. As the Romans marched through the valley of the Stour, the enemy cavalry

engaged in skirmishes with the Roman cavalry and were beaten back, but the latter

suffered loss by pursuing incautiously. The most determined attacks occurred one day

when the Romans were constructing a camp for the night; the Britons charged from the

woods and attacked the cohort on guard duty. Caesar dispatched two more cohorts but the

Britons were able to escape through a gap between them. The skirmishing continued,

with the Romans being unable to properly adapt to the Britons' tactics. The Britons

simply ran when the legionaries formed up. The Romans, weighed down by armor, were

unable to effectively pursue and, in any event, were reluctant to leave their formations.

The Roman cavalry was at a disadvantage as well, as the British would lure them away

from the support of the legionaries. At that point, the warriors would leave their chariots

and fight as infantry in close support with their own cavalry.[403] The only solution the

Romans found for these tactics was to keep the infantry and cavalry in close proximity to

each other.[404] In the day's skirmishing, a tribune named Quintus Durus was killed but

additional cohorts eventually were able to drive the Britons off.

The Romans had likely been attempting to gain a road or trackway which would

enable them to move inland toward Cassivellaunus' dominions; he would have been

recognized as the primary enemy and target in the allied tribes.[405] The Britons' strategy

was likely not, as some have postulated, a deliberate attempt to lure the Romans inland

away from their naval camp, leaving it vulnerable. Cassivellaunus did not dismiss his

infantry immediately as would have been the case if he initially intended to lure the

Romans inland, but only following a severe defeat.[406] In addition, the attack on the camp,

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[403] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.16.
[404] Frere, *Britannia*, 35-36.
[405] Frere, *Britannia*, 36.
[406] Brady, "Caesar and Britain," 309.

when it came, was obviously not strong enough to overcome the garrison (the size of which the Britons would have been fairly well informed). With Caesar's army to the north, the Kentish tribes would have time and impunity to prepare, making their failure inexcusable if it was part of Cassivellaunus' grand strategy.[407] It is far more likely that Cassivellaunus urged the camp attack as part of a desperate gamble as Caesar approached his heartland and began gaining allies, as will be seen.

It would have been risky for the Romans, however, to march northward with an undefeated enemy army in the immediate vicinity, and perhaps have it move on the naval camp and the fleet. The next day the Britons renewed the skirmishing, driving back cavalry outposts, although the attacks were not apparently as vigorous as those on the previous day. Caesar, in turn, sent the entire cavalry force along with three legions to forage under Gaius Trebonius.[408] Part of the force, likely a legion, began to cut grain while the remainder stood drawn up in battle formation. At this point, Caesar records, the Britons rushed en-masse from their hill positions against the guard units. It is again unclear whether this attack was ordered by the Britons' leadership or whether the warriors, despising the Romans due to the previous day's events, spontaneously launched an attack.[409] Whatever the reason, this attack was exactly what the Romans needed and wanted. The Britons attacked the legions head-on and were driven back and routed. The cavalry, closely supported by the legionaries, pursued the enemy and prevented them from rallying, killing a great many in the process. The British chariots were unable to employ their standard tactics, due to the speed of events and compression of forces, and were swept up in the retreat.[410]

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[407] Brady, "Caesar and Britain," 310.
[408] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.17.
[409] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 340.
[410] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.17.

This engagement was decisive and had several important effects. First, the demonstration of Roman superiority (coupled with the later crossing of the Thames) encouraged the Trinovantes to send emissaries to Caesar, promising submission and requesting that Mandubracius be sent to them along with Roman protection.[411] Caesar agreed and dispatched Mandubracius in exchange for forty hostages and grain. This, in turn, encouraged other members of the defensive league, the Cenimagni, Segontiaci, Anacalites, Bibroci and Cassi, to submit. The engagement also prompted a major change in the tactics of the Britons. Cassivellaunus evidently judged that his warriors were no match for the Romans in a face-to-face engagement.[412] The only realistic alternative would have been to harass and try to contain and wear down the Romans. While the infantry could accomplish this, keeping the army fed would have presented an ever increasing challenge. Therefore, Cassivellaunus disbanded his army, sending all his infantry back to their homes while keeping four thousand chariots and their supporting cavalry with him.[413] These highly-mobile and highly-skilled warriors kept up close harassment as the Romans marched north to the Thames.

The Roman march northward, toward the Thames and the territory of the Trinovantes, must have occupied nearly a week but goes largely undescribed by Caesar. The standard Roman practice when marching through enemy territory was to destroy or take everything they could get their hands on in order to both gain loot, and terrify the enemy into submission.[414] Cassivellaunus was able to limit this somewhat through two methods. First, he had either predicted or discovered the Roman route of march and was thus able to instruct civilians to take themselves, their cattle and possessions to strong-

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[411] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.20-21.
[412] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 39.
[413] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.19.
[414] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Campaigns of Julius Caesar*, 344.

points and woods away from the route of march.[415] Secondly, his chariots and cavalry, intimately familiar with the terrain, attacked the Roman cavalry whenever they moved away to plunder and devastate, preventing them from ranging far from the immediate vicinity of the legions.[416] This meant that looting and destruction could only be safely done by the legionaries themselves, severely limiting the scope of the damage. While these tactics could slow, tire and frustrate the Romans, they could not stop them.

The Romans reached the Thames to find that the only fordable spot had been fortified by Cassivellaunus. The defenses consisted of a row of stakes on the far bank behind which the British warriors massed, likely again including some of their infantry. In addition, prisoners revealed that there were additional stakes concealed under the water. The exact location of this ford has also been hotly disputed, and it has been generally agreed to have been somewhere in the vicinity of modern London. [417] It is possible that the ford was located at Brentford, now a suburb, as dredging has produced pilings that possibly could be described as obstacles. This is hardly conclusive, however, as wooden pilings are not exactly unknown in rivers, especially near an urban area. Caesar sent his cavalry to swim the river a little ways away from the ford, likely in the hope that the enemy would be distracted and drawn away, and so be unable to stop the legionaries making their way past the obstacles.[418] The legionaries, possibly frustrated by the previous week's march and eager to engage with the enemy, made rapid progress and crossed the river at almost the same time as the cavalry. The British levies were unable to withstand the combined onset of force and fled, Cassivellaunus again resorting to guerilla warfare.

[415] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 39.
[416] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.19.
[417] Frere, *Britannia*, 36.
[418] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.18.

The Romans thus passed into the relatively friendly territory of the Trinovantes, who duly delivered the required hostages and grain. As well, it is likely at this time that Caesar received the emissaries from the other surrendering tribes, all of which were likely dependent tribes of either the Trinovantes, or perhaps occupied the area of the future Catuvellauni. These envoys revealed the location of Cassivellaunus' stronghold, a fortified wood with both natural and manmade defenses. This might have been Verulamion, near modern St. Albans, the future capital of the Catuvellauni tribe, but Caesar's description does not seem to indicate a permanent habitation at that site.[419] Other scholars favour Wheathamstead, a hill-fort located just west of the River Lea.[420] In any event, it could not have been far from the river Lea, the boundary with the Trinovantes. Despite the defenses, the Romans launched a two-pronged attack on the stronghold, killed or captured a large number of those who took refuge there and captured a large number of cattle. It is possible that that Cassivellaunus had gathered the bulk of his people there for safety, and the capture of the site would have been a heavy blow to both his economy and prestige.[421] This defeat came roughly at the same time as a battle in Kent which, combined with the taking of the stronghold, effectively ended all resistance in southern Britain.

The abortive defense of the ford was likely only a delaying measure on the part of Cassivellaunus. During the Roman march, he had been urging what Caesar describes as the four kings of Kent, named Cingetorix (not the similarly-named member of the Treveri), Carvilius, Taxmagulus and Segovax, to attack the Roman naval camp and burn the fleet.[422] This would have had the effect of trapping the Romans in Britain, where they

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[419] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.21.
[420] Peddie, *Conquest*, 13.
[421] Goldsworthy, *Caesar*, 351.
[422] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.22.

could be gradually worn down and defeated. Finally, it was possible that Cassivellaunus was receiving similar reports to Caesar about unrest in Gaul, and the Romans would be more concerned with leaving the island than conquering it at this point.[423] At the very least, Caesar would have been prompted to leave Cassivellaunus' territory and return to Kent. The Kentish tribes, which likely came from the southern portions of the region, were led by a chieftain named Lugotorix and were doubtlessly encouraged by the relatively small garrison and the potential booty within the camp. Their attack was repulsed with heavy losses when the garrison launched a sortie and drove the tribesmen off. Lugotorix himself was captured.[424]

This event was the second possible occasion for the August 5th (Julian) letter mentioned by Cicero. Some scholars have postulated that the attack on the camp was alarming enough for Caesar to return to the naval camp to evaluate the situation for himself.[425] Caesar does not mention such a journey, but he is generally vague about his activities in the weeks before his departure. Cicero states that the August 5th (Julian) letter explains why his brother was not with Caesar when he returned to the coast.[426] It is possible that Caesar would use a legate as an emissary to one of the tribes, but it is more reasonable to assume that at least part of the army was somewhere else when Caesar returned to the coast. The next letter from Caesar which Cicero refers to was written on August 29th (Julian) and mentions that affairs in Britain were concluded and the army was on the point of withdrawing.[427] It is very unlikely that Caesar would sit on the coast idle

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[423] Brady, "Caesar and Britain," 311.
[424] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.22.
[425] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Campaigns of Julius Caesar*, 348.
[426] Cicero, *Letters to his Friends (Letters to his Brother Quintus)*, 3:3.1.25.
[427] Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 1:4.18.5.

for a month before leaving the island, a quick trip from the army to the naval camp and back is certainly possible, and Caesar could move very quickly when he needed to.

The tribal defeat at the naval camp and the capture of his stronghold apparently ended any desire to resist on the part of Cassivellaunus.[428] Hundreds of his people were now to be sold as slaves and a large amount of his cattle had been captured. In addition, a number of his allies and dependents were revolting against him. He sent envoys to the Roman camp to negotiate his surrender, calling on Commius to intervene on his behalf.[429] For his part, Caesar was growing alarmed about the reported unrest in Gaul and had thus decided to return to the continent for the winter. Cassivellaunus could have still maintained his guerilla tactics and, as summer was drawing to a close, Caesar might have been forced to leave without any definite victory. Therefore, Caesar merely requisitioned hostages, dictated an amount of annual tribute to be provided, and left strict injunctions for Cassivellaunus to leave the Trinovantes alone. These negotiations and other activities likely consumed the remainder of August, and it would have been in the last week that he returned to the coast and wrote the August 29th letter to Cicero.

While the summer's campaigning had been going on, the crews at the naval camp had been working hard to repair the fleet. When the army returned, it found most of the ships seaworthy, but the number destroyed or damaged beyond repair had to have been considerable given the apparent violence of the storm and poor seaworthiness of the ships.[430] Due to this lack of shipping and the considerable numbers of prisoners and slaves, Caesar resolved to make the crossing in two trips. The first crossing went well and Caesar expected the empty transports to return for the remainder of the army, along with

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[428] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.22.
[429] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.22.
[430] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.23.

sixty vessels, which Labienus, in Gaul, had completed. Unfortunately, only a few of both the old and new ships were able to return, the remainder being blown back to the continent by contrary winds. Caesar spent some time, from several days to two weeks, waiting.[431] Finally, with the autumnal gales approaching, he felt he could not risk being trapped in Britain with only part of his army, especially if Gaul was as unruly as reported. He packed everyone into what ships he had and, taking advantage of a calm sea, sailed at the beginning of the second watch (around 9 pm), the overcrowded transports reaching the continent at daybreak. The crossing was an impressive feat of luck and seamanship. In fact, as Caesar proudly remarks, not a single ship or soldier had been lost at sea throughout the naval operations.[432]

This was the end of Caesar's invasion of Britain. On paper, at least, he had triumphed over the most powerful British tribes and established client relationships among them. However, he retrieved no booty beyond slaves (he does not mention what happened to the cattle that had been captured, and it is possible these had been consumed in the interim), and despite his stated or implied intentions, the island was not permanently occupied. In this sense, then, the invasion was a failure. The disappointment of not achieving pre-invasion expectations can be seen in a letter of Cicero complaining that no gold or silver had been found, only (low-quality) slaves.[433] Caesar was quickly occupied with various revolts throughout Gaul, culminating in Vercingetorix's rebellion. It is doubtful, in light of these rebellions and the subsequent civil war, that the levied tribute was maintained for long or even delivered at all. The surrender agreement with Cassivellaunus was more of a face-saving gesture on Caesar's part than an actual

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[431] Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 350.
[432] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.23-24.
[433] Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 1:4.17.4.

triumph. While practical results were debatable, the invasions did, however, have a

profound effect on the island and its relationship to the wider European world.

Figure 7: Kathy Noltze, "Map of Kent", for *Folkstone and Bits of Britain*, Magnum Travel Inc., 2009, http://www.propertypurveyor.com/FolkestoneMapLowRes.jpg, (Modified by Author Jan, 2011).

Chapter 6: Aftermath

While the invasions might have lacked concrete results in terms of a Roman occupation or defeat, they ultimately brought the island into the Romans' sphere of influence. In addition, the invasions affected conditions on the island, especially in regards to the Catuvellauni tribe. This chapter will attempt to examine the direct results, and the legacy of the invasions for both the Britons and Romans in terms of policy and politics up to the invasion of Claudius in 43 CE.

The evaluation of the success or failure of the invasion(s) of Britain depends a great deal on what exactly the strategic purpose of the operation was. If the purpose was, as Caesar stated, an expedition to prevent the British tribes from interfering in the new Roman political order on the continent, then the invasion can be considered something of a political success.[434] The British tribes, especially those on the coast, had received a clear demonstration of Roman power and determination which would discourage them from provoking or contributing to further unrest on the continent. The strongest tribes in the southeast of the island had formally submitted and come into alliance with Rome. An annual tribute had also been levied, and by all appearances the tribes had come into the standard client kingdom/alliance system, seen especially in the enthroning of Mandubracius with the Trinovantes, that the Romans commonly employed on their frontiers. The client system was meant to provide a buffer between Roman controlled territory and potentially hostile peoples beyond.[435] The lack of further mention of Britain in the commentaries of Caesar would suggest to the uninformed reader that Caesar

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[434]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.20.
[435]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.22-23.

considered the problem posed by the island had been successfully dealt with and the wider operation an overall success.

There is some evidence that the island might not have been quite as submissive as Caesar claimed. One of the refugees from the Battle of Alesia was the (Belgic) Atrebatian king Commius who had become estranged from the Romans after several of Caesar's officers allegedly attempted to assassinate him.[436] The exact circumstances are unclear: Hirtius claims he was pardoned by Mark Antony, while Frontinus (first century CE) records him escaping by sea, but at some point Commius travelled to Britain and became king of the Atrebates there.[437] How he achieved this is unknown, but it is possible that he possessed kin in Britain or that he had made connections while serving with Caesar. In any event, coins bearing his name (or that of his son) were being minted in Cavella around 30 BCE.[438] Whichever anecdote is true, Frontinus' or Hirtius', this event is significant in this discussion because it would seem to indicate that Britain still served as a possible haven for refugees, a situation that was one of Caesars' initial complaints. On the other hand, Caesar does not record engaging the Atrebates on the island or receiving their submission, and it is possible that they did not consider themselves bound to cooperate with the Romans. There would have been little Caesar could do about this problem given the Roman's other military commitments. With the available evidence, however, there was little to no British interference, even during the height of the civil war when dispossessed nobles could be expected to attempt to take advantage of the situation.

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[436] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 8.23. Book 8 was written by Aulus Hirtius after Caesar's death.

[437] Sextus, Julius Frontinus, *The Stratagems, and the Aqueducts of Rome*, 2:13.11. Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 8.48.

[438] Frere, *Britannia*, 40.

It is likely, then, that Caesar could indeed claim that the island had been neutralized in terms of Gallic affairs.

However, when considering Caesar's potential motives, it becomes evident that evaluating the success or failure of the operations is far more complicated. In purely tactical terms, the invasions could be defined as a success. Caesar had transported an army across the channel and back again twice. In 55 BCE, he had militarily defeated the local tribes in Kent and gained their nominal submission before departing. This was achieved in the face of severe damage to his fleet and a lack of cavalry. The second and larger operation the following year saw the Britons defeated on a larger scale, despite additional storm damage to the Roman fleet. Throughout the operation, not a single ship or soldier was lost during either channel crossing.[439] It might be claimed that the safe crossings and invasions had more to do with luck than good planning, but Caesar was not ashamed of this, and on other occasions prided himself on his good fortune and credited it with positive events.[440] The evidence does suggest that Caesar had been negligent in his leadership, especially during the second operation, having conducted inadequate reconnaissance and failing to properly beach the fleet for example, both failures placing his army at unnecessary risk.[441] However, one of Caesar's skills as a commander was to successfully extract his forces from dangerous and potentially catastrophic situations. In Britain he succeeded both years in bringing the army home to the continent without major losses. Considering the Romans' relative unfamiliarity with the channel and island, the

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[439]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.23.
[440]   Caesar, *The Civil Wars*, 3.26. In this example Caesar credits luck in the shifting wind allowing his reinforcements to land safely in the face of an enemy fleet. This is the closest he comes to the fishing boat anecdote related by Plutarch, *Lives*: *Caesar,* 7:38.5.
[441]   S. G. Brady, "Caesar and Britain," 305.

severe storms, and the strength of local opposition, the crossings and invasions can be considered a major military accomplishment.

Caesar's likely unstated goal in 54 BCE was to fully occupy south-east Britain and turn it into a Roman province in the same manner he was attempting to do in Gaul. In this strategic objective he failed completely. There were two main reasons for this failure. The first reason was that his base of operations on the continent was not secure. The Gauls were increasingly discontented with Roman overlordship and revolts became more frequent over time. The campaigns against the Morini both prior to and after the 55 BCE expedition, and the campaign against the Treveri in 54 BCE, illustrate that the Romans constantly had to keep watch over the increasingly restless Gallic tribes.[442] The opportunistic nature of Gallic society and respect for strength (or disgust at the lack of it) meant that a successful revolt against Roman authority would have encouraged other tribes to follow suit.[443] This would be especially dangerous if the coastal tribes revolted and seized the ports, making the transport of supplies to the forces in Britain, and of Roman troops back to the continent, much more difficult. Caesar had left his most capable subordinate, Labienus, behind specifically to hold the ports for this exact reason.[444]

This leads to the second reason for the failure to permanently occupy Britain: the resources Caesar had at his disposal were, quite simply, insufficient for the task. Effectively waging a sustained campaign in and garrisoning Britain would have required a substantial number of troops. At the same time, Caesar had to deal with growing revolts in Gaul, as well as having to keep his rivals in the Senate in mind. To do all this would

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[442]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.22, 4.33 (Morini), 5.3 (Treveri).
[443]   Haywood, *The Celts*, 66.
[444]   Caesar, *The Gallic War,* 5.8.

have spread the army available to Caesar too thinly, and would have led to disaster. To illustrate the manpower demands, the army that the emperor Claudius and his commanders thought sufficient to invade and occupy Britain in 43 CE consisted of four legions at full strength and an equal number of dedicated auxiliaries, an army two to three times the size of Caesar's.[445] At that time, the empire was more or less at peace and there was little danger of a revolt or external attack when these troops were withdrawn from the Rhine and Danube frontiers, two legions and a presumably equivalent number of auxiliary units having been created to replace them on the northern frontiers.

As this size of force was required to subdue and defend Britain over a long period of time, it would have been impossible for Caesar to attempt to maintain an occupation strong enough to resist the inevitable revolts in Britain and subdue the revolts in Gaul at the same time. It could be argued that he could have raised new legions, as he subsequently did, but the fact he made no attempt to do so at the time would indicate that he judged himself incapable of holding the island.[446] His absence from the continent would only encourage revolting tribes there, and the forces that had been left in Gaul were insufficient to suppress these uprisings. Labienus would have kept Caesar informed of the growing unrest in Gaul. If these reports were accurate, and there is no reason to doubt that they were from the accounts of the subsequent revolts, it would have been obvious that he needed to be in Gaul with his entire army, as that province was, ultimately, far more important to him than Britain.

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[445] John Peddie, *Conquest: the Roman Invasion of Britain,* 38.

[446] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 6.1. Caesar, in 53 BCE, anticipating a renewed revolt in Gaul, raised three new legions, the fourteenth (replacing the one that had been destroyed), fifteenth and sixteenth. He claims this was done not out of fear of the rising but to demonstrate that Roman resources were limitless.

For Caesars' other possible motives, obtaining wealth and glory, the results are also somewhat negative. Ancient authors such as Suetonius, as mentioned previously, believed Caesar's primary goal was wealth.[447] Caesar records that the island was relatively densely inhabited and the Romans could have reasonably expected to find rich booty in their scavenging.[448] However, this expectation does not appear to have been realized for several reasons. The Britons' main form of wealth, according to Caesar and other writers, appears to have been cattle, a highly mobile resource that can easily be moved out of the path of an invader.[449] The Romans did not penetrate far during the first invasion, and delays imposed by the construction of the naval camp and British skirmishing during the second allowed the British civilians to relocate themselves and their property to safe locations. The fact that the Roman cavalry was unable to safely range far from the main column also limited their ability to gather wealth through pillage, and a more permanent occupation was required to exploit the island's reputed mineral wealth. Caesar claims that at the end of the 54 BCE operation, he had captured a number of prisoners to sell as slaves, along with a large number of cattle (from Cassivellanus's stronghold).[450] However, the cattle are not mentioned again following their capture (if he is being accurate there would not have been room on the ships for them, and it is possible they were consumed or sold). The sale of slaves (in this case, northern barbarians generally only suitable for manual labour or gladiatorial exhibitions) would likely not have offset the expense of the expeditions. This lack of financial rewards is corroborated by a letter of Cicero which states that such slaves were the only resource which was

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[447] Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*: *Julius Caesar*, 47.
[448] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.12.
[449] Haywood, *The Celts*, 39.
[450] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.21-23.

extracted from the island.[451] Plutarch, writing much later in the late first century CE, also believed that the Romans had not gained much in terms of wealth from the expeditions.[452] It is unknown whether the tribute decreed as part of the peace settlement was ever paid, especially given the Gallic revolts and Roman civil war.

The public fame and recognition Caesar received from his expedition to the island is also questionable. He had received twenty days of public thanksgiving for his first invasion and if he had received similar acclaim for the second it is odd that he does not mention it.[453] On the other hand, expectations raised in Rome, which can be clearly seen in Cicero's letters to his brother and friends, would have likely been disappointed.[454] Therefore, while the accomplishment might have been celebrated by a populace excited about such an adventure, there were likely at least some who felt that the operation was unfinished or even a colossal waste of time. For his part, Caesar attempted, through his commentaries, to emphasise his achievements to the public and downplay any problems which might account for his failure to emphasize his achievements. In any event, any political capital or public acclamation would have been quickly overwhelmed by news of a series of increasingly severe revolts by the Gallic tribes, culminating in the great revolt of Vercingetorix in 52 BCE.[455] Overall, the invasions could be termed a tactical success and a possible strategic failure depending on the motives. Caesar triumphed militarily and could thus claim and take credit for success. Britain was 'neutralized' as a destabilizing element for Gaul but it was not conquered. On the other hand, the invasion failed to

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[451]   Cicero, *Letters to Atticus,* 1:4.17.4.
[452] Plutarch, *Lives: Caesar*, 7:23.4.
[453]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.38.
[454]   Cicero, *Letters to his Friends (To his Brother Quintus)*, 3:2.16.4.
[455]   Peddie, *Conquest*, 15.

achieve most of the 'unstated' goals, although Caesar was able to brush these failures aside.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult to evaluate the results of the invasion from the British perspective beyond the obvious loss of life and damage inflicted by the campaigning armies. The Romans and their authors, occupied with the revolts and civil wars, proceed to effectively ignore the island for a considerable period following the invasions. The opinion of the tribes likely depended a great deal on how directly involved they were in the fighting, and their opinions were probably mixed as well. Tribes like the Iceni, Atrebates and Belgae who were either un- or peripherally involved would likely have been relieved that the Romans had not reached them. As well, they were possibly happy that the power of Cassivellaunus, who had been frequently warring with other British tribes, had been diminished, and therefore likely saw the invasion as at least somewhat beneficial to their people.[456] The Trinovantes also likely saw the Roman invasion as beneficial, especially during the reign of Mandubracius. The Roman intervention had freed them from Cassivellaunus' control and restored their independence. They also gained access to and control of new Roman trade between the island and continent due to their position at the mouth of the Thames estuary and status as Roman allies.[457]

Those peoples who were most active in resisting the Romans, and had suffered accordingly, likely had a far more negative view of the invasions. The Kentish tribes suffered because both invasions passed through their territory and apparently they suffered severe losses. In addition, the traditional trade with the continent through the

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[456]   Frere, *Britainnia*, 48.

[457]   Dunnett, *The Trinovantes*, 11.

Veneti, which Caesar claimed made them the most civilized of the Britons, had been disrupted or destroyed by various Roman campaigns.[458] Instead, new trade routes formed, passing, as mentioned, through the Trinovantes to the north. Therefore, they likely viewed the invasions in a wholly negative light, simply being relieved that the Romans had left. The same can be said for Cassivellaunus and his people, whether they were the Catuvellauni or not, as they had suffered heavily. Cassivellaunus suffered a severe blow to his personal prestige when Caesar captured his stronghold and cattle.[459] Definite limits were placed on his power, including promises not to molest the Trinovantes whom he had previously conquered. It is not known what happened to Cassivellanus following the invasions, as he is never mentioned again in any existing text. It is possible that his people were defeated and absorbed by the Catuvellauni (assuming he was not part of this tribe or the confederacy that would become this tribe), but it is also possible that he chose to stay quiet and start repairing his tribe's power.[460] Regardless, he likely viewed the Roman invasion as a disaster for himself and his tribe with the only slight saving grace being that the Romans did not stay.

The Roman invasions also had major long-term effects on the island. In general the island was opened to the Roman world through trade. Trade was ongoing, in one form or another, from at least the Gallic defeat at Alesia. This victory made it safe for Roman merchants to operate in the new province, and allowed them to fill the void left by the defeat of the Veneti. The introduction and spread of coin minting in the late first century, moving from a Celtic style to an increasingly Roman one, is evidence of both the increasing penetration and importance of this trade to the British tribes. Under Cunobelin,

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[458]   Detsicas, *The Cantiaci*, 3.
[459]   Branigan, *The Catuvellauni*, 4.
[460]   Branigan, *The Catuvellauni*, 4.

trade flourished with, according to Strabo, grain, gold, silver, iron, hides, slaves and hunting dogs being exported.[461] In return, the Britons imported luxury items such as Italian wine and cups, Spanish olive oil and fish sauces, glassware, jewellery and Gallic tableware and prestige items.[462] The distribution of these trade goods would indicate that the main point of entry was through Camoludunum and the Thames estuary, rather than Kent, as had been the case previously.[463] According to Strabo, the customs duties on British trade were much larger than what would be collected through taxes if the island was conquered, giving us some idea of the value of the trade.[464] Along with this trade came Roman habits and customs, such as leaders referring to themselves as *Rex* (meaning 'king') on their coins, which ultimately made the integration of the south-east into a Roman province somewhat easier.[465] It also likely led to, as will be seen, a stabilized client relationship. This profitable trade relationship continued through the reign of Tiberius but broke down due to the continuing expansionist tendencies of the Catuvellauni.

For the period between 54 BCE and 43 CE, specific internal developments in Britain are somewhat difficult to track. The Romans were too busy with their own affairs for a large portion of this period to pay any attention to the island. As well, political decisions on the part of the emperors limited direct Roman involvement. The written records we possess are therefore sparse, and we are forced to rely on other sources for evidence on British political developments. Numismatics (the study of coinage) has been

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[461]   Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, 2:4.5.2.
[462]   Frere, *Britannia*, 290.
[463]   Dunnett, *The Trinovantes*, 124.
[464]   Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, 2:4.5.3.
[465] Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession*, 73-74. Mattingly speculates that the use of 'Rex' and other Roman imagery in their coinage by British leaders is an indication of a formal acknowledgement of their client status.

found particularly useful, as it can provide rough dating, the names of kings, and mint locations (usually tribal capitals), giving at least some information on territory and political shifts. Pre-Caesar coins do appear in the region, although their design style and minting can be traced to the continent, having been imported as part of the trading networks.[466] As the local minting of coinage became increasingly widespread in Britain during the inter-invasion period, it is one of our primary resources.

The general trend in the relevant region is one of centralization under the Catuvellauni. Examination of the period between Roman invasions will mostly focus on the Catuvellauni, Trinoventes and Cantiaci tribes because they were the ones most directly affected by Caesar, and were in the forefront of resistance to the Roman invasion under Claudius. The origin of the Catuvellauni also serves as a direct example illustrating the effect that the Romans had on the island.

There are three general theories regarding the origin of the Catuvellauni tribe. The first is that Cassivellaunus' people might have been the Catuvellauni and Caesar, for whatever reason, simply does not mention the name. There is some support for this theory in that his territory matches up to the later recorded territory of the Catuvellauni.[467] There is also the similarity of the names Cassivellaunus and Catuvellauni which might suggest that they are linked in some way. There was an extended period between 54 BCE and the first evidence of Catuvellaunian expansion, which was quite possibly enough to recover from whatever damage Caesar inflicted. The role Cassivellaunus played in this recovery is unclear. Conventional wisdom would suggest that Cassivelaunus' authority and prestige would have been diminished by the defeat and he would have been

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[466] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 32, 43-46. Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession*, 69-73. Coinage during this period shifted from Celtic imagery to more Roman style.
[467]   Branigan, *The Catuvellauni*, 26.

overthrown or reduced in power. The bulk of the recovery would then have been left to his successors. It has been suggested by Peddie, however, that his success in resisting the Romans for so long, coupled with the lenient peace terms, actually increased his prestige and control.[468] Either way, the Roman invasions were a prime motivating factor for the leadership in rebuilding the tribe's power. The problem with this theory is that, according to Caesar, his authority was already diminishing, with a number of subordinate peoples revolting away from him. There is, unfortunately, no evidence to say for certain. This origin theory is, as mentioned, the simplest and the one most cited in histories.[469]

With the next theory, endorsed by Graham Webster, the supremacy of the Catuvellauni is an even more direct result of the Roman invasions. Under this theory, an unknown tribe (possibly one of the five listed below) led by Cassivellaunus existed between the Catuvellauni and the Thames and the former was absorbed by the latter after Caesar left it in a weakened state.[470] As evidence, Graham cites the lack of pre-Roman Gallo-Belgic coins in this territory, indicating, to him, that the inhabitants were older Brythonic stock compared to the Catuvellauni, who did produce Gallo-Belgic coins. Webster holds that the damage inflicted on Cassivellaunus' people was too great for them to have achieved a dominant position at a later date and rendered them easy prey for the Catuvellauni.[471] The strong, newly enlarged Catuvellauni, would then be in an excellent position for further expansion. The problem with this theory is that it is dependent on the assumption that Cassivellaunus' tribe was too badly damaged to recover and that the lack of Gallo-Belgic coins is conclusive proof that they were not Belgic in origin.

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[468] Peddie, *Conquest*, 14.
[469] Frere, *Britannia*, 35. Holmes, *Ancient Britain and the Invasions of Julius Caesar*, 300.
[470] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 32, 46.
[471] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 46.

A third theory, which this author supports, suggests that the Catuvellauni formed from a merging of smaller tribes, who might have already possessed a loose confederacy, mentioned by Caesar, but not by any subsequent writer following Caesar's departure.[472] These tribes, the Cenimagni, Segontiaci, Anacalites, Bibroci and Cassi, are, with the possible exception of the Cenimagni, never mentioned by subsequent authors. This discrepancy would be neatly explained by them formally merging. In this case, Cassivellaunus might have been the leader of one of these sub-tribes, possibly the Cassi given the shared name. The obvious demonstration of Roman power and of the tribes' corresponding weakness might well have prompted them to amalgamate for their own safety.[473] If Cassivellaunus' prestige, as related above, was not overly diminished, he might well have been the driving force behind this move, also accounting for the similarity of names. The combination of damage recovery and amalgamation likely took some time, however. Whichever origin theory is correct, the Catuvellauni became militarily dominant in south-eastern Britain but, as will be seen, had to contend with the reality of Roman dominance on the continent which appears to have limited their expansion somewhat.

The first Catuvellaunian king after Cassivellaunus (if he was a Catuvellaunian) for whom we have evidence, and the first to mint coins, was Tasciovanus, whose coins begin appearing around 20 BCE.[474] These coins bear the mint mark of Verulamion (St. Albans), the tribal capital.[475] Evidence, as seen above, suggests that this king was quick to assert his power, especially against the Trinovantes. Coins bearing his name and the mint mark of Camoludunum were issued between 15 and 10 BCE, indicating that he had

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[472]   Branigan, *The Catuvellauni*, 4.
    [473] Branigan, *The Catuvellauni*, 6.
[474]   Branigan, *The Catuvellauni*, 6.
[475]   Branigan, *The Catuvellauni*, 6.

possession of that site. However, production of these coins appears to have ceased shortly after, indicating that the Trinovantes had regained control of their capital. Interestingly, other coins have been found dating roughly to this period bearing the names of what are believed to be various sub-kings following the leadership of Tasciovanus.[476] These coins are comparatively rare, and it appears that they were limited to a single issue, but they do provide evidence that Tasciovanus was increasingly powerful.

Tasciovanus appears to have had two sons, Cunobelin and Eppitacus. Near the end of Tasciovanus's reign, around 9 CE, Cunobelin began minting coins from Camulodunum indicating that he had conquered the Trinovantes.[477] At the same time, coins with his father's name continued to be issued from Verulamium, although those appear to have ceased following the latter's death around 10 CE.[478] Thereafter, Cunobelin seemed to have made Camulodunum the wider tribal capital, as his coins continued to be minted there. The coins also show increasing Roman imagery, including the Latin word *Rex* indicating comparatively close relations with Rome and the influx of trade into the Thames River basin.[479] His brother, from the distribution of coins bearing both his and his father's names, appears to have expanded the tribal territory at the expense of the Atrebates and established himself at Cavella (Silchester) around 25 CE.[480] It is likely he was permitted to govern this area by his brother as part of the wider Catuvellaunian hegemony in the same manner as the sub-kings mentioned above. Eppitacus' coins appear to cease being minted around 35 CE, indicating his death occurred around this time. His expansionist policies were continued, however, by Cunobelin's sons.

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[476] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain,* 51.
[477] Branigan, *The Catuvellauni,* 8.
[478] Branigan, *The Catuvellauni,* 9.
[479] Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession*, 73.
[480] Frere, *Britainnia*, 45.

Cunobelin had three sons mentioned on both coinage and by ancient writers such as Suetonius and Cassius Dio. The eldest, Amminius, was appointed to command Kent, and was exiled by his father around 40 CE.[481] There is less numismatic evidence for the other two brothers, likely due to the fact that they had little time to enjoy supreme authority. Togodumnus, of whom no coins have been discovered, succeeded his father to the throne in 42 CE and empowered his brother Caractacus to continue his uncle Eppitacus' expansion against the Atrebates. The limited coin dispersion of Caractacus supports this proposed arrangement, and ancient writings indicate that he was successful in driving the Atrebateian king, Verica, into exile.[482] Unfortunately, Verica fled to Rome to seek shelter with the emperor Claudius, and the latter seized that as an excuse to launch an invasion in 43 CE.[483] Togodumnus appears to have been killed at some point early in the campaign, while Caractacus waged a guerilla war for some years before finally being captured in 51 CE.[484] The expansion of Catuvellaunian power, possibly due to the long reigns of their kings and their skilled diplomatic and military leadership, had, by 43 CE, brought much of the south-east of Britain under their power and they likely would have continued to expand, although the extent to which this hegemony could have been maintained is unknown. Suetonius calls Cunobelin 'King of the Britons" which somewhat illustrates his perceived power and authority at the end of his reign.[485] The behavior of the Catuvellauni, particularly in regards to the Trinovantes, also demonstrates recognition of political realities, in that the Romans were at their most vulnerable when the Catuvellauni made their move to annex the Trinovantes. This also illustrates the

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481   Branigan, *The Catuvellauni,* 30.
482   Branigan, *The Catuvellauni*, 30.
483   Branigan, *The Catuvellauni*, 9.
484   Peddie, *Conquest*, 170-171.
485   Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Caligula,* 44.2.

influence that fear of Roman retribution had, possibly a holdover memory from Caesar's time regularly reinforced by Augustus: the Romans came over once and they could come again.

It is not necessary to go into quite so much detail with the other tribes as their history has already been touched on. Caesar mentions the Cantiaci having four kings during his invasion, but it is not precisely known how power sharing was arranged, or if this situation was normal or an anomaly.[486] It is possible that they were responsible for uninscribed coins which are believed to have been issued in this period. The first subsequent leader to issue inscribed coins was one Dubnovellaunus.[487] The earliest of these coins was a Celtic design including an unusual silver motif of three horse heads and six forelegs arranged in a six-pointed star. These designs suggest that he was minting fairly soon after Caesar's last invasion, likely around 40 BCE. Later coins were of a more-Roman influenced design, reflecting increasing Roman influence through trade spreading from the Thames basin. Dubnovellaunus is believed to have reigned until close to the end of the first century BCE. The next inscribed coins are those of Vosinos, whose coins apparently ceased circulating around 15 CE.[488] He might have succeeded Dubnovellaunus or been a co-ruler.

The coins of the next king are stamped with the name Eppillus.[489] There is some uncertainty as to the precise identity of this individual. Many scholars believe that he was the former king of the British Atrebates who, deposed by his brother, was invited to take the throne of Kent, possibly indicating a dynastic connection with Vosinos.[490] His coins

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[486]   Detsicas, *The Cantiaci,* 1.
[487]   Detsicas, *The Cantiaci,* 4.
[488]   Detsicas, *The Cantiaci*, 4.
[489]   Frere, *Britainnia*,43.
[490]   Frere, *Britainnia*, 43.

are widely distributed but appear to be centered on modern Rochester, possibly the

location of the mint. His coins remained in circulation until around 30 CE. Throughout

this period, an increasing number of coins inscribed with the name of Cunobelin, king of

the Catuvellauni, appeared throughout Kent. This could indicate increased inter-tribal

trade or increasing influence, leading to outright conquest of the region by the

Catuvellauni, or a combination thereof. By roughly 30 CE, it appears that the

Catuvellauni had gained some measure of control over the Cantiaci, as coins printed with

the name Amminius begin appearing. [491] He was one of three sons of Cunobelin, and his

coins bear a mint mark indicating he was based in Durovernon (Canterbury). Around 40

CE, Amminius was exiled, either by a revolt in Kent or, more probably, machination by

an anti-Roman faction led by his brothers.[492] He fled to the court of Caligula who

depicted his flight as a great victory on his part.[493] Thus the evidence shows that in the

period between the Roman invasions, the Cantiaci came under the domination of foreign

kings and of the Catuvellauni, in addition to losing valuable trade routes.

The Trinovantes had, as mentioned, greatly benefited from Caesar's expeditions.

In addition to their territory becoming the site of new incoming Roman trade, they were

protected by Roman influence, as will be seen, on at least one occasion. Caesar had, as

mentioned, placed Mandubracius on the throne of the Trinovantes in 54 BCE after the

former had fled to the Romans following Cassivellaunus' conquest of the tribe. During

the invasion, the Trinovantes appear to have proved unenthusiastic about resisting and

eagerly welcomed Mandubracius back. Nothing further is known about him or how long

he ruled. Coins of the next identifiable ruler, Addedomarus, began appearing sometime

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[491]   Detsicas, *The Cantiaci*, 5.
[492]   Detsicas, *The Cantiaci,* 5.
[493]   Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Caligula,* 44.2.

between 25 and 15 BCE.[494] It is unclear whether Addedomarus was a son or grandson of

Mandubracius, or was of a different house altogether and had gained power through a

civil struggle. His coins bear the mint mark of Camulodunum (Colchester), the tribal

capital. At some point around 10 BCE, the Catuvellaunian king, Tasciovanus, appears to

have taken Camulodunum, with coins bearing both his name and that mint mark

appearing around this time.[495] Addedomarus appears, however, to have regained

Camulodunum fairly quickly and reigned until 5 BCE. He may have been succeeded by

Dubnovellaunus (possibly the same man who ruled Kent, although how exactly he

managed this is unknown) who ruled at least until 7 CE, when he is recorded as being a

supplicant to Augustus. [496] Around 9 CE, the Catuvellaunian king, either Tasciovanus or

Cunobelin, began issuing coins with the mint mark of Camulodunum, indicating that the

Trinovantes had again been conquered.[497] Dubnovellaunus is recorded as being a

supplicant to Augustus, and it is likely he fled to find sanctuary with the Romans.[498] It

appears that, by 43 CE, the Trinovantes had politically become merged with the

Catuvellauni and would provide as fierce resistance as any tribe against the next Roman

invasion.[499] Again, the numismatic evidence illustrates the centralization and expansion

of the power of the Catuvellauni in south-east Britain. However, the disruption caused by

the Catuvellauni in their expansion ultimately provided the emperor Claudius with an

excuse to launch a military campaign he felt compelled to undertake in order to justify his

own rule. That discussion is outside of the scope of this paper, but we should turn now to

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[494]   Dunnett, *The Trinovantes*, 12.
[495]   Dunnett, *The Trinovantes*, 12-13.
[496]   Dunnett, *The Trinovantes*, 13.
[497]   Dunnett, *The Trinovantes*, 15.
[498] Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti,* 6.32.
[499]   Dunnett, *The Trinovantes*, 30.

a discussion of the interactions between Rome and the island during this period between 54 BCE and 43 CE.

For the first part of this period, there is little to no evidence to be found in Roman sources regarding Britain. Immediately after the invasions, Caesar was occupied with a series of increasingly severe Gallic revolts. The first, in 54 BCE, was instigated by the leader of the Treverii, Indutiomarus, who felt that Caesar had diminished his power, and, led by Ambiorix, saw the near complete destruction of the fourteenth legion.[500] The second, and far more serious, revolt was led by Vercingetorix in 52 BCE, and involved nearly the whole of Gaul. This revolt was finally crushed during the siege of Alesia which ended any further serious attempts to resist Roman rule.[501] One of the refugees from this engagement was the (Belgic) Atrebatian king Commius who, as discussed previously, had become estranged from the Romans and fled to Britain.[502] His descendants, as previously mentioned, were gradually pressured by the Catuvellauni until the latter conquered them shortly before the Roman conquest. While not a direct or deliberate action on the part of the Romans, this sequence of events shows that circumstances on the island could be affected by events on the continent, thus illustrating an inter-connectiveness that would only grow with time.

For the next twenty years, from 49 to 30 BCE, the Roman world was engulfed in civil war and the Romans, quite frankly, had no time for anything but their own affairs. The only references to Britain are oblique ones. Cassius Dio records an inspirational speech by Octavian (Augustus) to his troops before the Battle of Actium (30 BCE). In this speech, the troops are exhorted to remember the accomplishments of their forebears,

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[500]   Ceasar, *The Gallic War*, 5.26-37.
[501]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, Book Seven.
[502]   Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 8.23. Book 8 was written by Aulus Hirtius after Caesar's death.

including the crossing to Britain.[503] While this comment provides no real information, and it is very questionable whether the speech was in fact ever given, it could show that the Romans still regarded the invasions of Britain with pride, even in the second century CE, and the island possibly remained in the public consciousness during the civil wars. One reason for this might have been that Roman traders had, as mentioned, quickly filled the vacuum left by the Veneti and established a brisk trade with the Trinovantes, exchanging luxury goods for raw materials.[504] This alone would have kept at least some prominent Romans interested in the island.

It was only after the victory of Augustus, the establishment of the Principate, and the reorganization of the Empire, that the Romans were able to consider wider extra-Empire relations. There is still relatively little recorded about Britain but it is possible to divine some of Augustus's policies toward the island. As mentioned, the Trinovantes had been left as client-allies of the Roman people and it is likely that other tribes, such as the Atrebates, also shared this designation.[505] By Roman standards, this meant that the clients would have relative independence, but possessed limited control of their foreign policy, and required Roman approval for anything major like territorial expansion. In return, the allies would be supported by the Romans, either through monetary or military assistance.[506]

The whole point of such an arrangement was to maintain the status-quo and peace relatively cheaply without requiring the expense of a permanent garrison and administration. This fit well with Augustus' policy of limiting the expansion of the

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[503] Cassius Dio, *Roman History,* 5:50.24.4.
[504] Dunnett, *The Trinovantes*, 11.
[505] Peddie, *Conquest*, 46.
[506] Kimberly Kagan, "Redefining Roman Grand Strategy," *The Journal of Military History* 70, no.2 (Apr., 2006), 36-37.

frontier boundaries of the Empire at the end of his reign, and he could maintain stability

in these regions without actually controlling bordering client territories. Strabo explicitly

states that due to client relationships the island was virtually Roman property during the

reign of Augustus.[507] Additional support for the existence of this arrangement can be

found in the *Res Gestae Divi Augusti,* a funerary inscription written by Augustus to

recount his deeds and accomplishments. One paragraph, describing alliances and

supplicants, lists Dumnobellaunus and Tim- (the inscription is damaged), from Britain

presenting themselves to Augustus in supplication.[508] This Dumnobellaunus is believed to

be the one who ruled the Trinovantes and was exiled as a result of Cunobelin's invasion

of his kingdom. Tim- is believed to be Timcomarus of the Atrebates who was expelled

from his kingdom around this time (8 CE).[509]

The main priority for the Romans was to keep pro-Roman officials in charge who

would support friendly relations and keep their people from disrupting the frontier or

other client kingdoms. This was generally achieved through a combination of threats and

bribes. Another method was to raise the sons of rulers taken as diplomatic hostages in

Rome. Not only would this practice keep the fathers cooperative but the sons would,

hopefully, be fully Romanized when they gained power, although results varied (there

was frequently a culture shock, for example).[510] When Timcomarus was expelled,

Augustus chose to recognize and approve of his successor as sufficiently pro-Roman,

rather than incur the expense and difficulty of an operation to restore him.[511]

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[507] Strabo, *The Geography of Strabo*, 2:4.5.3.
[508] Augustus, *Res Gestae Divi Augusti,* 6.32.
[509] Frere, *Britannia*, 42.
[510] Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals*, 2:11.16-17. Claudius sent the thoroughly Romanized Italicus to become chief of the German Chauci tribe but the latter's Roman manners quickly led to strife.
[511] Frere, *Britannia*, 43.

Despite this general policy, Cassius Dio records that Augustus resolved to invade the island on three occasions. The first, in 34 BCE, was simply planned to emulate his adopted father (Caesar), and was called off due to a revolt in Dalmatia, and possibly his continuing rivalry with Antony.[512] The second, planned in 27 BCE, was for unknown reasons, but the Britons were prepared to come to terms and Gaul was still fairly unsettled, which led to the cancellation of the invasion.[513] The last, planned in 25 BCE, was to make the Britons come to terms (Dio uses Britons in general but the threat was probably aimed at a specific tribe), but was again cancelled due to revolts nearer to home.[514] It is notable that the first plan occurred shortly before the recommencement of civil war, when Octavian was eager to make himself stand out over his rivals, while the second and third invasion plans occurred early in Augustus' reign, when he was still attempting to settle himself and the Empire after years of civil war, and/or win victories over non-Roman opponents. It is also likely that he had not yet fully established the client-kingdom system that would be a standard policy for the early Empire. Another possibility is that Augustus was simply warning the Britons to stay in line as it were, reminding them of the lessons Caesar had taught them.

This system in south-east Britain began to break down fairly late in Augustus' reign due to the ambition and expansion of the Catuvellauni, principally through the conquest of the Trinovantes. Here, though, evidence can also be seen of the influence of the Romans on the peoples of the island. Tasciovanus' occupation of Camulodunum and the withdrawal from that territory in 15-10 BCE roughly corresponds to an extended trip by Augustus to Gaul in order to manage the region and oversee punitive campaigns and

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[512]   Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 5:49.38.2.
[513]   Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 6:53.22.5.
[514]   Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 6:53.25.2.

colonization.[515] Although there is no definite evidence, it is likely that diplomatic pressure and the implicit threat of the emperor being with the army in Gaul prompted Tasciovanus to withdraw. In the same vein, the final conquest of the Trinovantes by Cunobelin occurred around the same time as the destruction of three legions in the Teutoburg Forest in Germany in 9 CE.[516] It is not clear whether the occupation of the Trinovantes occurred before or after the defeat, but it would likely have been clear to Cunobelin that the Romans would be fully occupied dealing with the German revolt and would not have resources available to support any order or threat forcing his withdrawal.

Following Augustus's death in 14 CE, his successor, Tiberius, continued his peaceful frontier policies.[517] As the early years of Tiberius' reign were occupied with a mutiny among the legions on the Rhine frontier, along with further punitive campaigns in Germany, the Romans were still in no position to employ force in their diplomatic efforts.[518] This may have prompted Tiberius to make a face-saving recognition of Cunobelin's control of the Trinovantes. That this control was acknowledged can again be seen in the term *Rex* employed on his later coinage.[519] Interestingly, Tacitus records that some Roman troopships were blown off course during this period and landed in Britain, with the troops being sent back by the local king.[520] The fact that the troops were apparently returned without being molested could indicate that the Britons recognized their place in the client system or were at least wary of inflicting a direct insult that the Romans would have to respond to, and possibly damage trade relations. Compared to

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[515]   Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 6:54.21-26.
[516]   Cassius Dio, *Roman History,* 7:56.18-24
[517]   Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Tiberius*, 37.4.
[518]   Tacitus, *The Annals*, 1:1.16-44.
[519]   Mattingly, *An Imperial Possession,* 74.
    [520] Tacitus, *The Annals*, 1:2.24.

what happened to the two transports of Caesar's that were blown off course in 55 BCE, this event could indicate a general recognition of Roman supremacy.[521]

Tiberius appears to have largely ignored the establishment of Catuvellaunian hegemony throughout south-eastern Britain.[522] According to various ancient writers, this could be due to Tiberius being disenchanted with politics and becoming increasingly isolated and indulging his own pleasures on Capri.[523] On the other hand, it can be argued that relations with Cunobelin were friendly, profitable and stable. There was likely little reason to protest and risk the status quo so long as the Catuvellauni stayed responsive to Rome's interests. An anti-Roman faction gaining power in a relatively large and prosperous territory, like that of the Catuvellauni, however, would definitely not be in Rome's interest and at the very least prompt an attempted regime change. This is speculated to be precisely what happened in the final years of Cunobelin's reign. Cunobelin appears to have been pro-Roman but throughout his reign had to consider anti-Roman sentiments, effectively balancing the interests of his own people, influential (anti-Roman) druids, and the Romans.[524] At some point in 39-40 CE, his sons Togodumnus and Caractacus forced their enfeebled father to expel their possibly pro-Roman brother, Amminius, from Kent. He fled to the safety and sanctuary of Caligula, who had succeeded Tiberius in 37 CE, and promised his submission.[525] The refusal of the Romans to return Amminius served to further inflame anti-Roman sentiment on the island.[526]

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[521] Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 4.37. The Morini attacked the passengers of the transports despite the wider Roman army being close enough to intervene directly.
[522] Frere, *Britannia*, 45.
[523] Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Tiberius,* 43-45.
[524] Webster, *The Roman Invasion of Britain*, 63.
[525] Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Caligula*, 44.2.
[526] Detsicas, *The Cantiaci*, 5.

Caligula, according to Suetonius, interpreted the submission of Amminius as the

submission of the entire island, and treated it as a famous victory in an address to the

Senate.[527] He also appears to have tried to organize an expedition to the island in 40

CE.[528] While there was sufficient reason, from the Roman perspective, to remove the anti-

Roman influence of Amminius' brothers, the sources were so hostile to Caligula that it is

difficult to determine what exactly happened. Ancient authors' opinion of Caligula

ranged from considering him to be extremely vain and egocentric to completely insane.

The sources record that he led an army to the Channel coast and then ordered them to

attack the waves and collect seashells as spoils of victory.[529] Modern scholars have

attempted to discern exactly what the point of this 'battle' was. One suggestion is that

Caligula merely intended a show of force to intimidate the Britons into a more favorable

disposition, and never intended to launch an invasion at all.[530] Another suggestion was

that Caligula was fully in earnest about an invasion and had made real preparations. The

construction of a lighthouse at Boulogne has been ascribed to him, and would indicate

that he was seriously planning a naval expedition. His plans were, however, foiled by a

mutiny among his troops who were reluctant to travel to Britain.[531] Claudius' invasion

plan would suffer from a similar mutiny in 43 CE, but the troops were eventually talked

into going regardless.[532] If this theory is accurate, then it is possible that Claudius simply

revived and updated a pre-existing invasion scheme. Another theory holds that the

passage concerning this episode has been corrupted and that the term 'seashell', in fact,

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[527]   Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Caligula*, 44.2.
[528]   Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 7:59.25.
[529]   Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars*, 1:3.46.
           [530] David Woods, "Caligula's Seashells," *Greece & Rome*, Second Series, vol. 47, no. 1 (Apr.,
2000), 81.
[531]   Woods, "Caligula's Seashells," 82.
[532]   Cassius Dio, *Roman History*, 7:60.19.2-3.

refs to British ships that had been captured, possibly as punishment for Amminius'

exile.[533] Whatever happened, and it could be that Caligula was simply as crazy as

reported, he did not invade Britain and Amminius remained in exile.

Claudius, 'elected' emperor by the Praetorian Guard following the murder of

Caligula in 41 CE, is believed to have resolved to invade Britain very early in his reign.[534]

His succession was unstable and he badly needed a military victory to assert himself.[535]

As the situation in Britain had already provided the excuse, i.e. the need to have a pro-

Roman ruler of the Catuvellauni, and much of the necessary apparatus might have been

previously assembled by Caligula, Britain was the logical choice for a campaign, as the

rest of the empire was fairly quiet. The expulsion and exile of the Atrebatian king,

Verica, gave Claudius the needed pretext.[536] Suetonius refers to demands of the Britons to

return 'certain deserters', which was both an affront to Rome and illustrative of increased

anti-Roman sentiments on the island.[537] Amminius and Verica were both likely returned

to the island following the invasion, and possibly made governors of their respective

territories as a reward for their loyalty to Rome.[538]

In conclusion, Caesar's invasions, while tactically successful and achieving

Caesar's stated objective, largely failed in their unstated aims and were quickly eclipsed

by events in Gaul and Rome. Despite this, the invasions remained a source of pride for

the Romans, and Britain remained in their consciousness and open to Roman commercial

and cultural incursions. Ultimately, an extremely lucrative trading relationship developed,

furthering the spread of Roman influence among the Britons, and forcing them to respond

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[533]   Woods, "Caligula's Seashells," 83.
[534]   Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Claudius*, 10.
[535]   Peddie, *Conquest*, 23.
[536]   Peddie, *Conquest*, 23.
[537]   Suetonius, *The Lives of the Twelve Caesars: Claudius*, 17.
[538]   Peddie, *Conquest*, 115, 133.

to and acknowledge Roman activities on the continent. Within the island, numismatic evidence shows a general trend toward centralization, with the establishment of Catuvellaunic hegemony through much of the south-east portions of the island. Political relations with Rome largely remained stable, with several client-state relationships developing, the most important of which was with the Catuvellauni. The ascension to power of an anti-Roman faction, however, destabilized relations and prompted two further invasion attempts. The first, under Caligula, was abortive but the second, under Claudius, would prove successful, with subsequent campaigns bringing most of the island under control by 84 CE. The new province, however, would never be entirely stable and the Romans would face fierce resistance and repeated revolts from the natives, coupled with yet another exposed frontier with Scotland and Germany across the North Sea which would bedevil the Romans until the final abandonment of the province around 410 CE.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Caesar's motives for launching the expeditions were likely far more complicated than he states in his commentaries. While his professed reason, to prevent the Britons from interfering in Gaul, is perfectly justifiable by Roman standards, his real motivations were likely far more mercenary. Caesar was attracted to the prospective wealth of the island, in addition to the glory and prestige such an expedition would grant him in Rome. In light of these goals, the invasion can be considered an immediate tactical success in that he defeated the Britons. Politically, Caesar succeeded in defeating the local tribes, nominally bringing them into a Roman client relationship, imposing a tribute (which was likely never paid), and preventing them from interfering in Gaul. Strategically, however, he failed to occupy the island, or gain much in the way of material riches. In the long term, as Rome fell into a period of revolt and civil war, any glory he accrued would have been quickly overshadowed, although it is possible that it could have been used as unrecorded propaganda. The client relationship only began to truly take shape as conditions stabilized under Augustus. In these respects then, the operations could be considered a general failure.

Caesar's account of his two expeditions to Britain also present, on the surface, many unanswered questions for modern scholars. On what dates were the invasions launched? From what ports did the Romans set sail? What were Caesar's exact motives and why did he launch the 55 BCE expedition so late in the year? Where did the Romans land and where did they go afterwards? Finally, what were the real practical results of the operations? In addition, Caesar wholly neglects to consider the perspective of the Britons, how the invasions were viewed and how the tribes were affected.

143

However, as the above discussion has shown, it is possible through a detailed examination of Caesar's account and other literary and archeological evidence to provide answers to these questions. Dating can be defined through mention of astronomical occurrences by Caesar or through dates provided in the letters of Cicero, for example. Archaeological excavations show that there was a great shift in trade patterns on the island as a result of the invasions. Caesar's landing point can be somewhat fixed through tidal patterns and subsequent tradition. All these questions and more can be and are considered to be answered fairly conclusively by modern scholars. This is not to say there are still no points of debate. While most scholars favour Boulogne as being Portus Itius, there is still evidence that Wissant might be a candidate for that site. Likewise new experimental evidence has called into question the estimated date for the 55 BCE invasion. However, the locations of various engagements and events in Britain, such as the crossing of the Thames, are more based on speculation and examination of the wider campaign than direct evidence.

Regardless of Caesar's motives and the success or failure of his expeditions, the invasions had a major effect on the local tribes. Traditional trade patterns were altered, and the political landscape of the south-east began to change, with the Catuvellauni becoming preeminent. At the same time, interactions between the island and the Empire became more regular as a client relationship became established, and evidence suggests that at least some British chiefs nominally acknowledged the supremacy of Rome. The ascendency of an anti-Roman faction, however, destabilized relations, ultimately leading to a renewed invasion in 43 BCE.

Appendix A: Timeline

Event and Date	Evidence
-Caesar campaigns in Gaul: 55 BCE	Caesar: *The Gallic War*, 1-4
-First Expedition to Britain: August 22nd-23rd or 26th-27th	Caesar: *The Gallic War*, 4.29: Full Moon on August 30th -31st four days after landing.
-Storm on August 30th- 31st	Caesar: *The Gallic War*, 4.28
-Attack on seventh Legion: early September	Caesar: *The Gallic War*, 4.32.
-Battle at Roman Camp: early- mid September	Caesar: The Gallic War, 4.35.
-First expedition leaves Britain: mid-late September	Caesar: *The Gallic War*, 4.36. Equinox close at hand.
-Caesar Arrives at Portius Itius, Fleet trapped 25 days:	Caesar: *The Gallic War*, 5.7
-Second expedition sails: first week of July	Cicero, *Letters to his Friends (Letters to his Brother Quintus)*, 3:2.16.4.
-Storm one to two days after landing,	Caesar: *The Gallic War*, 5.11.
- Ten days salvaging the fleet, Roman army at the coast	Cicero, *Letters to his Friends (Letters to his Brother Quintus)*, 3:3.1.13.
-Battle at Roman Camp: mid-late July	Caesar: *The Gallic War*, 5.17.
-Crossing the Thames: late July	Caesar: *The Gallic War*, 5.18.
-Attack on naval camp: late July, Early August	Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.22.
-Caesar at Coast: August 5th	Cicero, *Letters to his Friends (Letters to his Brother Quintus)*, 3:3.1.25.
-Stronghold stormed, Britons submit: Early-mid August	Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.21-22.
-Caesar concludes operations, returns to coast: August 29th	Cicero, *Letters to Atticus*, 1:4.18.5.
-First transport wave departs: early September	Caesar, The Gallic War, 5.23.
-Remainder of army departs: mid September	Caesar, *The Gallic War*, 5.23. Equinox close at hand.

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