

Boudicca's Rebellion Against Rome



The Boudiccan Revolt in 60 AD challenged the authority and sensibilities of the Roman conquerors. By the time General Gaius Suetonius Paulinus marched his army, consisting of one understrength legion and reactivated veterans of another, all the way across Britain to put down the rebellion, almost 200,000 people were dead – nearly all of them Britons. Led in vengeance by Boudicca, the scorned queen of the Iceni tribe, the revolt started a significant shift in how the Romans maintained their power in the far-off province and remains the core of British legends and folktales in modern times.

Boudicca's revolt is often overlooked by ancient historians as well as overemphasized in pop culture and revisionist history. Peter Connolly in Greece and Rome at War, gives the entirety of the revolt but one sentence in his treatment: "There was a setback in Britain when two of the native tribes rose in revolt under the legendary Queen Boudica [sic] and sacked several Roman towns, but the rebellion was easily suppressed." (211) Connolly downplays the short but violent revolt, ignores the destruction of two important settlements, and gives no reason for the reader to respect the power of Boudicca. Nick Constable in his Historical Atlas of Ancient Rome at least gives credit to Boudicca, calling hers the "bloodiest revolt". (100)

On the other side of Connolly and Constable is the perpetuation into modern times that Boudicca's chariot-mounted warriors rode into battle on unusual vehicles instead of the standard-for-the-era war chariot. TV

personality Jeremy Clarkson, host of the popular BBC Two series *Top Gear*, in 2008 built an inexpensive police car, equipped it with cutting spikes on the rear wheels, and invoked the Boudiccan myth, showing clearly that the legend of Boudicca's warriors still, in modern times, far outstrips its reality. Miranda Aldhouse-Green paints Boudicca's revolt as perhaps the most significant event in British history before the modern age, which certainly exaggerates the importance of the rebellion but also shows why the myths remain so strong in modern-day Britain.

INVASION & PACIFICATION OF BRITAIN

When Boudicca led her short but violent uprising, Rome was in its third attempt at pacifying the Celts of Britain. Julius Caesar conquered Britain in 43 BC, but subsequent civil war within the Republic drew military attention away from Britain, requiring another round of pacification by Claudius in the first century AD. While Claudius hunted down the defeated tribal chief Caratacus, who from 48-51 AD engaged in small-scale guerilla warfare, the Iceni tribe in eastern Britain made an alliance with the Romans, paying tribute and, of course, agreeing not to make war on Roman forces. In exchange, Claudius treated King Prasutagus as a trusted ally and left him alone to rule his people.

After defeating resistance led by King Caratacus of the Catuvellauni, Claudius captured the city of Camulodunum (modern-day Colchester), the

capital of the Trinovantes tribe and the center of resistance against the Romans, and burned it to the ground. He rebuilt the city in Roman fashion in 48 AD, announcing it would be the first city of *Colonia Claudia Victricensis*, or the Claudian Colony of Victory. (Peddie, 51, 93) Claudius then proceeded to distribute the land around the city to retiring legionaries. Claudius captured Caratacus and took him to Rome as a war prize to be displayed and publicly executed. After a passionate speech, the Senate pardoned Caratacus and allowed him and his family to live in Italy as permanent captives.

Following the departure of Claudius, ongoing pacification of the Britons fell to a series of governors, one of whom was Gaius Suetonius Paulinus. The Senate elected Suetonius as consul in 41 and 66 AD and Emperor Nero made him governor of Britain from 58-61. Suetonius' primary goal as governor of Britain was to eliminate the Druids, the high priests and priestesses of the nature-based Celtic religion. (Southern, 312) He was off destroying the Druids, their shrines and the sacred forest on the island of Anglesey off the west coast of modern-day Wales when Boudicca spurred the Iceni and Trinovantes into rebellion.

THE WAR CHARIOT, LEGIONARY ARMAMENTS AND LEGIONS IN BRITAIN

Caesar, Claudius and Suetonius all faced the same high-mobility weapon at the core of British tribal combat: the war chariot. Chariots having

been absent from war on the continent for several hundred years, Caesar found his forces vulnerable to the hit-and-run tactics of the chariot-equipped Britons. The tribes' chariot tactics staved off any kind of significant, decisive battle, forcing Caesar to fight a long, drawn-out war for which even his vaunted, veteran legions were ill equipped to fight. (Bradley, 1077)

According to archaeological evidence and period records discussed by Carl Meredith Bradley and Stephen Dando-Collins, the British war chariot was a simple affair with two large wheels and an open platform. The driver sat up front and controlled the team of two horses trained for chariot battle. A warrior, most likely a nobleman, stood in the back with a brace of javelins. Though most Celts went into battle stripped to the waist, the warrior used a narrow, rectangular shield; additionally, low wicker walls on the chariot itself gave some measure of protection to the legs of the occupants. Contrary to popular myths, British war chariots were not equipped with blades or scythes on the wheels (Caesar's Legion, 32); the axles would not have been able to handle the additional weight or the rotational forces generated by spinning blades. (Scott, 2)

The charioteer raced across the battlefield, the warrior loosed his missiles, and then both retreated to the rear to resupply as the infantry and standard cavalry joined the battle. Roman infantry generally engaged only other infantry forces of similar size and makeup; they were not used to dealing with a fast-moving chariot bristling with projectiles. Though

obviously the numbers and training of the Roman legionaries overcame the battlefield advantages granted to the Britons by their war chariots, it required adaptability and flexibility on the parts of Caesar and his devoted legions.

Compared to his Celtic tribal counterpart, the common Roman infantryman was heavily armed and armored. The average legionary between 100 BC and 100 AD went into battle protected by a large, rectangular shield, leather armor, possibly a brass breastplate and/or back plate and a helmet. Standard arms for a legionary was two javelins called *pila*, one heavy and one light, and a blade called a Spanish sword; when Rome's legions conquered Spain, they adopted the highly effective short, edged sword of the warriors they faced.

The Roman pilum underwent generations of revisions, but by the first century AD was perfected. A hardwood shaft between four and six feet long made up most of the length. A sharpened iron tip extended the pilum another 18 to 24 inches and was fitted to the shaft, held in place by friction and a soft metal peg run through both pieces. This peg was designed to break on impact, which prevented the enemy from picking up *pila* and throwing them back at the Roman soldiers. In addition, should the pilum become stuck in a shield, the carrier was more likely to discard the shield due to now-unwieldy weight rather than take the time to stop, remove the pilum, and continue his charge across the battlefield. A legionary carried

two pila, one that he could throw about 100 feet and a heavier one that could be thrown about half as far or used against an enemy armed with polearms.

Roman legions fought in compact units called cohorts, and each legionary was trained to obey his centurion (equivalent to a lieutenant in modern army hierarchy) and tribune (colonel). They were highly disciplined, rarely broke ranks in the face of the enemy, and could engage in a fully loaded forced march of 25 miles day after day after day.

By the time of the Boudiccan revolt in 60 AD, the armaments and tactics of the tribal warriors had not changed much, if at all, from the days of Caesar's invasion; similarly, the legions' primary advantage over their tribal enemies lay in their organization, training and command structure. Boudicca's rebels faced elements of three Roman legions.

The IX Hispania legion underwent reenlistment less than a year before the uprising. With the exceptions of a few dozen centurions, undertrained teenage Spaniards with no combat experience made up its entire complement. The XX Valeria Victrix legion had also recently undergone its reenlistment cycle. Its discharged veterans received land grants in various regions of Britain from Emperor Nero, and many of the veterans became farmers and settled down to family life. The new recruits of *legio XX*, gathered from northern Italy and Cisalpine Gaul, had yet to reach Britain, leaving the XX vastly understrength. Boudicca would have known of these

weaknesses in both legions and may very well have timed her revolt to take advantage of the raw recruits in the case of *legio IX* and the lack thereof in the XX. (Killing Machine, 274)

The XIV Gemina Martia Victrix legion was the primary force available to the Romans in Britain during Boudicca's uprising. It was established by Julius Caesar in 58 BC and combined with the Martia Legion in 31 BC, thus gaining its primary moniker, Gemina (from Gemini, the twins). Emperor Augustus granted them the name Victrix in 25 BC after the XIV performed gallantly in the civil war following the assassination of Caesar. By the first century AD, *legio XIV* was part of the Roman Army of the Upper Rhine, usually stationed in Germany, but in the 50s and 60s was detached to Britain under the command of Suetonius, the top commander in the region.

PRASUTAGUS

In an attempt to keep his land, estate and power intact, the Iceni king Prasutagus used his will – considered a near-sacred document in Roman times – to split his territory, giving half to Emperor Nero and half to his young teenage daughters. Due to the untimely – and apparently natural – death of Quintus Veranius, Britain was between governors at the time of Prasutagus' death and being administered by procurator Catus Decianus. When Prasutagus died, Catus sent some slaves, a small troop of lightly armed soldiers, and a few centurions to collect the Iceni king's estate.

Prasutagus' family and the Iceni nobles did not understand why Catus refused to honor the will and spoke up, resisting the soldiers. Protected by the imposing presence of the legionaries, Catus' slaves plundered Prasutagus' house, taking everything of value. According to Tacitus, the soldiers "outraged" Prasutagus' daughters – "outrage" being a euphemism for rape – and "scourged", or beat, the Iceni queen, Boudicca. Stephen Dando-Collins theorizes that the daughters, being virgins, were preteens; Tacitus does not address their age. (Nero's Killers, 199) In addition, all of Prasutagus' relatives were enslaved. (Tacitus, XIV 31) The centurions most likely set fire to any buildings of note, laughing and encouraging their legionaries as they brutalized the women. They left the naked, bleeding, sobbing women in the dirt as they returned to Catus' estate.

There could be any number of reasons why Catus violated the will, but the most likely is simply that Nero and all the other Roman officials would not have considered Prasutagus' will a legal document. Prasutagus was what the Romans called a "client king", meaning that he was a valuable, perhaps even trusted ally, but not a Roman citizen. Because he was not a citizen, technically Prasutagus could not have a will accepted by the Roman legal system. Nero would have felt completely within his rights as emperor in confiscating Prasutagus' entire estate; Catus, as his administrator, was Nero's presence in Britain and therefore tasked with that confiscation. The brutal behavior towards the Iceni leader's family, however, was more a

function of the arrogance of Romans and the general disregard they felt towards their subject populations. (Wacher, 228) Catus, humiliated by the course of events in the Boudiccan revolt, fled to Gaul after the destruction of *legio IX*, never to return to Britain. He was never mentioned in historical accounts by Tacitus or Dio again. (Liversedge, 11)

BOUDICCA

Little is known of Boudicca before she emerged as a rebel leader after the death of her husband. Following the violence perpetrated on Boudicca and her daughters, the Iceni queen had little difficulty in raising a rebellious and bloodthirsty army. It is likely that many Iceni warriors had disagreed with Prasutagus when he surrendered to Claudius, as many of them would have been descendants of Celts who escaped from Gaul during Caesar's subjugation of that region and therefore held a grudge against any invading Roman. That attitude combined with the loss of their king, the beating of their queen and the rapes of the princesses made the Iceni ripe for a strong and motivated new leader.

The Iceni had a small but well-trained army; joined by a mass of angry, unruly Trinovantes tribesmen (Hunt, 82; Tacitus, XIV 31), Boudicca commanded a large force bent on revenge. The Iceni were obviously looking for vengeance for the treatment the Romans laid upon their queen and her daughters. The Trinovantes' former capital city, Camulodunum, now lay in

the hands of the Romans, who not only commandeered the land surrounding the city and distributed it to retired legionaries, but also built a large, ornate temple to the Emperor Claudius in the middle of the city. No doubt the tribe still smarted from their defeat at the hands of Claudius' legions only a few decades before and wanted to settle the score.

SUETONIUS

Gaius Suetonius Paulinus was the equivalent of a modern-day lieutenant general and quite renowned in the Roman Empire. He was most well known for his lopsided defeat of a Moor army while governor of Africa in 42. (Nero's Killers, 203) He was a natural choice for the Senate to replace the deceased governor of Britain, powerful, successful and obedient to both the will of the emperor and the orders of the Senate.

Suetonius was a powerful and trusted member of the Roman elite. When the Boudiccan revolt took place, Rome had at her disposal a total of 25 legions, or about 250,000 citizen soldiers, plus at least as many additional troops, split between auxiliaries and cavalry¹. Suetonius commanded four complete legions, roughly 41,000 legionaries, auxiliaries and cavalry – and all in the relatively small province of Britain. He was also one of only 20 provincial governors, and served as such twice in his lifetime.

¹ Auxiliaries were allied troops, but unlike the legionaries, none of them were citizens. They came from regions surrounding the core Roman provinces. Rome provided them no weaponry or armor, but they did get paid. Cavalry troops were similarly allies for the most part, though most (if not all) Roman legions had a small number of inherent cavalry with them at all times. Auxiliary and cavalry units were both commanded by Roman officers.

Additionally, he served as the Senate's consul twice, once before his time in Britain and once after. As a result, Suetonius was one of the ten or twelve most important men in the Roman Empire. (Hunt, 96)

THE REVOLT

The revolt started when Boudicca's unruly army descended upon Camulodunum. The attack drew in the retired veterans of *legio XX*, who rushed to defend if not the town, at least the temple of Claudius. Upon learning of the attack on Camulodunum, Suetonius – who was occupied on the far-off Isle of Druids – immediately sent a message to Catus to send troops to the settlement.

Catus sent only 200 lightly armed men, who according to Tacitus were not even soldiers. (XIV 32) Combined with the XX veterans, this ragged and under-equipped force held onto the temple for just two days, until temple attendants secretly let rebels in. The rebels killed any Roman they could lay their hands on, then looted and burned the temple.

Petilius Cerialis brought his *legio IX* to bear in an attempt to re-take Camulodunum, but the agitated and now bloodthirsty Britons made quick work of IX's youthful, inexperienced legionaries. (Tacitus, XIV 32) Following this stunning, humiliating double setback, Cerialis retreated to a heavily fortified settlement with what remained of the IX and Catus left the island completely, hiding out in Gaul.

After destroying Camulodunum, Boudicca led her army west along the Roman road now known as Watling Street, inciting her force to kill Roman sympathizers and burn any building they spied. Eventually they reached the towns of Verulamium (modern-day St. Albans) and Londinium, where they launched into an extended frenzy of killing, burning and destruction, leaving the settlements barely more than smoking ruins. Despite having impressive stone gates on all sides, Londinium and Camulodunum were open cities and therefore basically defenseless; the defenders of Verulamium attempted to improve their minor defenses – a short wall and shallow ditch – to no avail. (Liversedge, 61) Once the settlements were destroyed, Boudicca’s army continued army westward.

THE BATTLE

Suetonius force-marched his troops from the Isle of Anglesey, off the northwest coast of Wales, to Londinium – about 250 miles – in about a week. A Roman army, unencumbered by its usually present baggage train, could move 25 to 30 miles in one day and Suetonius ensured no moss grew under his legionaries’ feet. In the case of their march across Britain, the Roman soldiers had one important benefit once they got on Boudicca’s trail – the presence of a Roman-built road, later known as Watling Street² and in

² The Latin “via strata” translates into literal English as “paved road”, or colloquially as “street”. In Latin, it lacks the connotation of a populated area.

modern times as the A2 and A5 roads that connect Dover to Wroxeter via London.

Boudicca's rebel army used Watling Street to travel as well, though they were more intent on destroying anything remotely connected to the Roman presence than in making good time. Suetonius headed first to Camulodunum, then Verulamium and on to Londinium, looking for the rebels but finding only dazed survivors of Boudicca's attacks. The survivors begged Suetonius to leave troops behind to protect them, but he refused.

Suetonius left the Isle of Anglesey with the full-strength *legio XIV* – about 5,000 legionaries and a small number of cavalry. Along his march he collected 2,000 Batavian³ auxiliaries and 1,000 cavalry. He waited for two days at Camulodunum while about 2,000 recently retired veterans of *legio XX* flocked to the settlement to join up with their general. By the time Suetonius finally faced the rebels, he commanded roughly 10,000 troops, but left all his artillery and siege equipment behind. Whatever battles his force fought would be strictly face-to-face.

Boudicca's army, enraged still over the behavior of Catus' men and running high on morale after their defeat of *legio IX* and the sack and burning of the three settlements, had most likely been worn down. Though the destruction of *legio IX* was swift, it would no doubt have cost Boudicca some of her experienced Iceni troops. These battle-hardened soldiers would

³ Batavia was the Roman name for the region surrounding Nijmegen in the Netherlands.

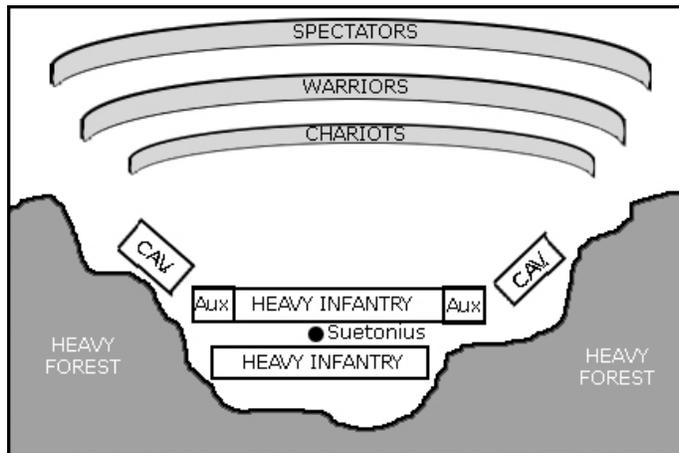
have been further depleted by the attacks on Verulamium and Londinium; though both were open settlements, well-armed and experienced garrisons protected Roman settlements in Britain. By the time Suetonius and Boudicca faced each other in battle, the rebel army of the Britons lacked most of its experienced veteran troops and was mostly untrained, poorly armed tribesmen lusting for blood and vengeance. The Roman army was bent on revenge as well; though they lacked significant numbers, they made up for that deficit with their training, discipline and armaments.

Suetonius made sure that what became known as the Battle of Watling Street took place at a time and place of his choosing. Using fast-moving cavalry troops as scouts, he found the perfect place to make what might be his last stand – a defile backed by heavy woods, which he searched thoroughly to be sure there was no easy way for the rebels to get around behind him. He backed his army into this natural defensive position and waited, knowing the locals would funnel information about his force's size and position to Boudicca's rebels. Though historians disagree as to the exact location of the battle, the town known as Mancetter derives its modern name from its Roman name – Mandeussedum, or the "Place of War Chariots". (Nero's Killers, 224) It is very likely the battle took place near there.

The Romans established their position with their backs to the woods, with two lines of heavy infantry making up the main body of the force.

Suetonius positioned himself between them, and had his auxiliaries take its place on the flanks of the heavy infantry. Further out was the cavalry, positioned to take advantage of any lapse on the part of the Britons, but also so that, if anything went wrong, some of them would be likely to escape and report to the procurator what happened on the field of battle.

Across the field, the Romans faced an unimaginably large mass of tribesman. Charioteers formed the first line, with the rest of the warriors just behind them. Boudicca backed her army with a line of baggage wagons



and spectators – women, children, the wounded and infirm left over from previous encounters. Dio claimed the rebels numbered about 230,000 (LXII.8), which seems like an insurmountable force. However,

in this era, every army traveled with a battery of onlookers and attendants, which would have made the force seem much larger than the number of actual soldiers that could be brought to bear in a battle. In this case it seems as if Boudicca brought the spectators and hangers-on along for a singular purpose: to motivate her warriors to fight as mightily as possible, knowing that should they fail, their families would unhesitatingly be put to the sword by the rampaging Roman legionaries. (Hunt, 108)

Boudicca spurred her charioteer to take her to the head of the rebel army, where she addressed her troops. According to Tacitus, she drew herself up to her considerable full height and her tawny, waist-length hair whipped in the breeze as she stood in her chariot with her daughters at her feet. She spoke to her troops, tribe after tribe:

It is not as a woman descended from noble ancestry, but as one of the people that I am avenging lost freedom, my scourged body, the outraged chastity of my daughters. Roman lust has gone so far that not our very persons, nor even age or virginity, are left unpolluted. But heaven is on the side of a righteous vengeance! A legion which dared to fight has perished; the rest are hiding in their camp, or are thinking anxiously of flight. They will not sustain even the din and the shout of so many thousands, much less our charge and our blows. You will see that in this battle you must conquer or die!

Tacitus, who was not present at the battle, most likely paraphrased legionary reports liberally, especially with Boudicca's speech. It is highly unlikely that the Britons and the Romans used the exact same words to describe what Catus' men did to Boudicca and her daughters. Meanwhile, Suetonius used the lull before the battle to rouse his troops with an inspiring speech of his own. Tacitus reports his words:

There you see more women than warriors. Unwarlike, unarmed, they will give way the moment they have recognized that sword and that courage of their conquerors, which have so often routed them. Close up the ranks, and having discharged your javelins, then with shields and swords continue the work of bloodshed and destruction!

Suetonius' orders to the legionaries were to wait patiently, using their shields to protect themselves from the first assault of the British charioteers. Normally the legionaries would advance into the attacking force, but Suetonius wanted the chariots out of the way before he launched his plan

into action. He yelled at his troops to stand fast as the javelins of the charioteers sliced into the lines – and true to their training and discipline, they obeyed even as their comrades fell, dead or wounded, to the ground.

Once the charioteers made their pass, Boudicca ordered her warriors to charge. Their screams must have been deafening as they ran across the clearing, but the Romans were not intimidated. Suetonius ordered his troops to charge, and they moved quickly into their prearranged wedge formations, shouting their battle cries as they advanced into the fray.

The Britons, despite having a century of experience fighting against Romans, had never faced the wedge formations. Suetonius' three wedges shed the Briton charge, half-naked warriors falling across the field as the Roman cavalry used their pila-like lances and the legionaries used their swords with exact precision, striking at the faces of the rebels to wreak as much havoc, fear and panic as possible. As the wedges broke the rebel line, confused Britons fell dead or wounded across the field.

The Romans drove the rebels back, where they became trapped between the legionaries and the mass of spectators. The cavalry kept the flanks secure, ensuring few Britons would escape the carnage. Ultimately, the legionaries compressed the rebel force, with warriors trying to run being prevented from doing so by the warriors behind them. The Romans continued carving their way through the Britons until they reached the row of spectators – and the slaughter continued there as the legionaries satisfied

their bloodlust and avenged both the youth of *legio IX* and the townspeople of the destroyed settlements.

Four hundred Roman soldiers fell that day. The rest of the small Roman force made the rebellious Britons pay a heavy price, killing nearly 100,000 of them in just a few hours. The orgy of destruction raged on for hours; by the end of the day the blood-soaked field of battle lay littered with the bodies of Britons and the plundered spoils from their wagons.

AFTERMATH

Tacitus and Dio disagree on what happened to Boudicca after the battle. Dio claimed she fell ill and died. (LXII.12) Tacitus wrote Boudicca killed herself with poison following the crushing defeat. (XIV.37) While either is possible, the latter is more likely. Due to the post-defeat treatment of Caratacus, Boudicca would have known that Rome's defeated enemies were usually taken as prizes, paraded through the streets of Rome as part of a ceremony known as a triumph, then imprisoned indefinitely and eventually executed. Fearing this result and due to the Celtic belief that a person's soul was constantly recycled after death into another living being, Boudicca would not have hesitated to commit suicide. Neither Tacitus nor Dio address the fate of the young Iceni princesses; if they did not fall in the epically lopsided battle, it is entirely likely they went on to live lives of utter obscurity.

Tacitus and Dio do agree on the behavior of Suetonius following his defeat of Boudicca's rebel army. In his position as governor of Britain, Suetonius commanded four legions – II, IX, XIV and XX. Though the latter two suffered only minor losses at the Battle of Watling Street, the IX was nearly completely destroyed by the rebels, and the II stayed in their camp and avoided the fighting altogether. After some time to regroup, Suetonius brought to bear the full force of his sizable force.

For the next year, Suetonius set about systematically hunting down and killing any Iceni or Trinovantes tribesman he could find; in modern times Suetonius' behavior would be classified as genocide. Any Briton that resisted him died or found himself a slave, shipped off to a far corner of the empire. (Aldhouse-Green, 225) As the rebellious tribes had foregone planting before the rebellion, Suetonius was able to extract a heavy price on what remained of the tribe by commandeering their meager crops to feed the Roman army, adding malnutrition and starvation to the danger faced by the Britons.

This vindictive behavior was not unprecedented. Julius Caesar himself engaged in a similar campaign to eradicate the Anvergnians, who, led by the legendary Vercingetorix, staged a massive rebellion at Gergovia, in Gaul. (Aldhouse-Green, 211) Caesar not only used prisoners to exchange for captured Roman soldiers, he also condemned many to death and slavery and

dispersed the loot gained from his vengeful campaign among his troops – a common practice used as an incentive to keep order in the ranks.

Emperor Nero eventually realized that Suetonius' campaign of scorched earth was steadily bleeding the Britons dry and would slowly choke off the stream of money flowing from Britain to his own coffers in Rome. In response, Nero sent a new procurator, Gaius Julius Alpinus Classicianus, to ease the friction between Suetonius and the Britons; soon after, Nero recalled Suetonius to Rome and replaced him with a new governor, Publius Petronius Turpilianus. Though he never again commanded a military formation (Aldhouse-Green, 221) Suetonius was not out of favor with Nero; he served another year as consul in 66 and lived out his life immortalized as the pacifier of Britain.



BOUDICCA – THE LEGEND

Miranda Aldhouse-Green addresses most thoroughly the mythical connections and comparisons made by Britons to Boudicca. In her book Boudica Britannia, she discusses favorable comparisons to Boudicca of Margaret Thatcher, Prime Minister from 1979-

1990, Cherie Blair, wife of Prime Minister (1997-2007) Tony Blair, Queen Victoria and Queen Elizabeth I. Perhaps her most telling comparison is between Boudicca and Joan of Arc – both were women thrust into a man's role as warriors and leaders in times when such power was incredibly uncommon. (245-47)

Roman tolerance of rebellion from conquered tribes had never been particularly gentle. Following Boudicca's revolt, Rome's emperors and generals became downright heavy-handed when faced with rebellion. Following the death of Nero, Rome entered into another period of civil war, which required her to call back to the core provinces her far-flung legions, resulting in a near-total abandonment of their outposts in Britain for a period of many years. However, Roman rule in Britain had been forcibly maintained, and it was a lesson the Britons never forgot. Never again was there as massive an uprising as that led by the Iceni queen Boudicca. The Roman citizens living there, over time, became intertwined with the Celtic population, creating another in a long string of Romanized regions left behind after the collapse of the empire.

Though Boudicca's revolt took place in eastern England, a region called East Anglia, her legend has been embraced by all of Britain, adapted by locals to fit their own particular mythological storytelling. (Aldhouse-Green, 249) Several localities – including Stonehenge – claim to be her burial

ground; one story even has her buried under Platform 8 at King's Cross Station in London – a station not even built until 1852!



Boudicca is represented in museums and by paintings, statues and stained glass windows across England, but especially in Colchester (Camulodunum) and London. A striking statue placed at Westminster Station in 1902 emphasizes Boudicca's long, flowing hair and has her, spear in hand, atop a scythe-wheeled war chariot with

her daughters gathered at her feet.

No fewer than four blockbuster films extolling the legend of Boudicca are rumored to be in production, including one called *Warrior* produced by *Braveheart* alumnus Mel Gibson. Other titles in production are *Queen Fury*, *Warrior Queen* and *My Country*; as of this writing none of them has found its way to the silver screen. (Jeffries, 2) In 2002, British television production company ITV made a film simply titled *Boudica*, which its screenwriter Andrew Davies called "a mixture of *Braveheart*, *I Claudius* and *Carry On Somebody*," lending further credence to the over-the-top nature of modern portrayals of the Boudiccan Revolt.

What remains in the minds of modern Britons reflects a portion of the true story, mixed with a healthy dose of revisionist history. Boudicca, herself flogged and forced to witness her daughters raped at the hands of Roman soldiers, embarked on a campaign of terror and vengeance. The Romans did not kill either her husband or her daughter; her husband died naturally and her daughters – though grievously so – were violated but not killed. Catus no doubt stole Boudicca's property and wealth, leaving her destitute and homeless – but she was still alive and free. Iceni anger towards the Romans at the treatment of their queen and her daughters seems to have overreached what could be considered reasonable, given that the tribesmen embarked on raids which ended with the burning of three cities and the deaths of tens of thousands of otherwise innocent Roman citizens and Roman-sympathetic Britons.

Suetonius' reaction to the rebellion was similarly out of perspective. He was, of course, expected to quash any rebellion and to punish any survivors, but his subsequent genocide of the Iceni was perhaps uncalled for, thus Nero's action of removing Suetonius as governor of Britain. The eradication of the druids was nearly complete at the time of Boudicca's revolt; it continued afterwards as part of Suetonius' revenge on Britain.

What is left behind is Roman historical accounts – no doubt biased in favor of the Roman side of the story – and modern British retellings – of course, biased in favor of the British side of the story. While each presents

certain truths of both Roman and British behavior in the first century AD, neither tells the complete story and much of what happened during Boudicca's life and the rebellion she led can only be read between the lines written in the pages of history.

Special thanks to Jennifer Smith for the photographs of the Boudicca statue outside Westminster Station in London, England.