

# How the Romans conquered Britain

Around 2,000 years ago, Britain was ruled by tribes of people called the **Celts**. But this was about to change. For around a century, the Roman army had been building an Empire across Europe. Now it was coming for Britain!

In **AD43**, the full might of the Roman army landed on the beaches in Kent. Over the next year it battled inland, storming through hillforts and chopping down anyone who stood in their way.

The Romans wanted Britain's precious metals. They called the land '**Britannia**', which meant 'land of tin'. However, they weren't just a destructive force - they built new forts, new settlements and roads. They spread their culture, language and laws.

## **Julius Caesar - 55 and 54BC**



**In 55BC, a fleet of ships carrying 20,000 Roman soldiers arrived on the Kent coast. At their head was Julius Caesar, - Rome's greatest general!**

Waiting for them on the beach were thousands of Celtic warriors. The Romans struggled to land and stormy seas wrecked their ships. Caesar had underestimated the Britons (and their weather) and he was forced to return home.

The next year, he was back with 50,000 soldiers. This time the Romans were too strong. They defeated many tribes and marched all the way to the River Thames. After three months of fighting, the Romans left Britain to stop a rebellion in Gaul.

## Caligula - AD40



**In the spring of AD40, the Emperor Caligula made a bizarre attempt to invade Britain.** His army was all ready to cross the English Channel to Britain. Then things got a bit strange. Roman historians say Caligula changed his mind about invading and ordered his men to collect seashells instead. He took these back to Rome and claimed he had conquered the ocean. It's a bit difficult to know what actually happened, because a lot of Roman historians didn't like Caligula. He was often represented as insane and cruel, so they might have exaggerated things.

## Claudius - AD43



**Nearly a hundred years after Julius Caesar first tried to invade Britain, the Emperor Claudius finally succeeded. This time the Romans were here to stay!**

They brought with them new weapons, like huge catapults called *ballistas*. Claudius himself even turned up with a troop of war elephants to make sure the battle was won.

But Britain wasn't conquered overnight. It took around 30 years of fighting for the Romans to control most of southern Britain.