

Boudica: the Warrior Queen [B2]

La regina degli Iceni condusse un esercito formato da diverse tribù nel corso di una rivolta sanguinaria contro gli invasori romani nella Gran Bretagna del I secolo d.C.



At the time of its invasion by the Roman Empire in 43 [AD](#), Britain was a [patchwork](#) of territories dominated by various tribes. A number of tribal leaders retained their power, becoming client kings of Emperor Claudius, paying [taxes](#) to Rome and allowing the military access to their land. As the new Roman occupation expanded in Britain, many of these members of the native aristocracy were influenced by Roman culture: they owned Roman [goods](#), adopted Roman habits, and sometimes even sent their sons to Rome to be educated.

BETRAYAL

One such tribal leader was Prasutagus, chief of the Iceni tribe of Norfolk in the east of England. Under Emperor Claudius's rule the Iceni [regarded themselves](#) as [allies](#) of Rome, but by the time of Prasutagus's death, Emperor Nero [ruled](#) the Roman Empire, and things

changed. Prasutagus was wealthy and in his [will](#) he left half of his [estate](#) to Nero and the other half to his two daughters. Nero was [displeased](#) by this. Assuming the Iceni were an easy target, he ordered the Roman army to attack the tribe and [plunder](#) their land.

REVENGE

Prasutagus' [widow](#) Boudica was crowned queen after her husband's death. While she tried to resist the Roman attack, her possessions and those of the Iceni tribe were [seized](#) by the soldiers; Boudica was publically [beaten](#), and her daughters [raped](#). [Enraged](#) by this humiliation, Boudica [rallied](#) an army of 120,000 soldiers from different Briton tribes. They [headed](#) to Camulodunum (present-day Colchester), a former tribal capital and a symbol of Roman power in Britain, which in 60 [AD](#) was a quiet, poorly-defended town where army veterans and their families lived. Boudica's army destroyed it and [slaughtered](#) its population.

FINAL BATTLE

Boudica then attacked Londinium (present-day London), which had been founded as a [trading port](#) for bringing people and [goods](#) into Britannia, and had a population of around nine thousand people. After destroying the [settlement](#), the Britons [headed](#) north west to Verulamium (present-day St. Albans). By the time its work was done, some seventy thousand Roman citizens had been killed. In 61 [AD](#), however, Roman forces finally [defeated](#) Boudica's army. In a battle that took place in an unknown location, possibly in the English Midlands, an estimated eighty thousand Britons were killed, while Roman [casualties amounted to](#) just four hundred.

UNCERTAIN FATE

Boudica's [fate](#) is [contested](#): some [accounts claim](#) she killed herself by drinking poison, others that she died after an illness, and was given an elaborate [burial](#). [Either way](#), she remained a minor historical figure until the 16th century, when favourable comparisons were made between Elizabeth I

and the ancient Iceni warrior. A speech Elizabeth I reportedly gave to her army at Tilbury before the battle against the invading Spanish Armada has some resemblance to a speech given by Boudica that was documented by the Roman historian Tacitus.

VICTORIOUS

Under Elizabeth I's successor, James I, Boudica once again fell out of favour. Her reputation, however, was revived during the reign of Queen Victoria. The 19th-century queen who presided over the expansion of the British Empire may well have felt some connection with the heroic defender of Britain. Coincidentally, the women had similar names, too: Boudica can be translated as 'victory'. In 1902 Boudica and her daughters were immortalised in a dynamic bronze statue that stands on London's Westminster Bridge near the Houses of Parliament. Boudica: Queen, Mother, Rebel, Warrior

Glossary

- **fate** = destino
- **accounts** = racconti
- **regarded themselves** = considerarsi
- **amounted to** = giungere a
- **may well** = potrebbe
- **goods** = beni, prodotti
- **estate** = patrimonio
- **raped** = violentare
- **rallied** = radunare
- **casualties** = vittime
- **AD** = d.C. (Anno Domini)
- **patchwork** = coacervo
- **ruled** = governare
- **displeased** = contrariato
- **plunder** = saccheggiare
- **widow** = vedova
- **seized** = impossessarsi
- **headed** = dirigersi
- **taxes** = tasse
- **allies** = alleati
- **contested** = mettere in dubbio
- **burial** = sepoltura
- **Either way** = in qualsiasi modo
- **fell out of favour** = cadere in disgrazia
- **slaughtered** = massacrare
- **defeated** = sconfiggere
- **claim** = affermare
- **beaten** = percuotere
- **settlement** = insediamento
- **Enraged** = fare infuriare
- **will** = testamento
- **trading port** = porto commerciale