

the Roman Occupation

when the Romans came to Britain, first under Julius Caesar in 55 BC and later under Claudius in AD 42, they found a race of Celtic people, the Britons, in occupation. These Britons resisted the Romans fiercely on the shores of South-east England but they were finally conquered and driven back. The Romans were not the first invaders of the country. The Britons themselves had come as invaders and they had been preceded by others, but until the coming of the Romans no written record of these influxes had been made. Gradually the invader occupied the Greater part of the Country, but soon he came up against the obstacle that had no doubt held up earlier invaders and was to hold up later ones- the mountains of Wales and Scotland. Among the mountains the Britons took refuge and here the invader was forced to come to a stop.

During the next four hundred years, though England became a Roman Colony. Wales and North West Scotland remained largely unconquered. The Romans made their magnificent roads into Wales (Watling street went from London to Anglesey), they built camps at Caernarvon (Segontium) and at Caerleon, and great walls to keep back the Scots. But outside the camps and beyond the wall, the Roman influence was hardly felt, the old Celtic language was spoken and Latin never became a spoken language there as it did in England, at any rate in the larger towns.

In AD 410 the Romans left Britain; their soldiers were needed to defend Rome itself against the Goths. It was then that the Angles and Saxons and Jutes came and seized the undefended Britain. And they came to stay. Once more the Britons of England were driven to the mountains of Wales and Scotland, west Ireland and the Isle of Man, to Cornwall or Brittany.